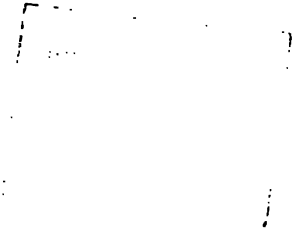
Thomas William Jansen

Christmas Present

from Mrs. Bass.

December 15 92.



"Break off the engagement, at all hazards," she answered.

THE

CONFESSIONS OF A SOCIETY MAN

EDITED BY

MISS BLANCHE CONSCIENCE

A Novel

"Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, aye, in my heart of heart."
—*Hamlet.*

CHICAGO, NEW YORK, AND SAN FRANCISCO.
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PREFACE

PREFACES are no longer in vogue for books of this kind, and I did not intend writing one. But, being a woman, I feared that, though few might read this work, yet there would be some who would attack my personal character because of my having lent my name to a book about which, they will claim, there is an atmosphere of social immorality. To these I have a few words to say.

These Confessions were handed to me, in the form of notes, by a New York society man who is widely known and who vouches for their truth. At his request I have undertaken the task of editing them, and for this reason:

I have pondered deeply on the question, Why is a man allowed so much wider latitude as to moral conduct than is permitted to a woman? Nay! why is it that men are even admired and courted for those faults which condemn women to infamy? These questions, I am aware, are not in any way new, nor am I prepared to say that they are answered here. But I have consented to revise these

Confessions, and give them to the world, in the belief and hope that a picture of society, from a society man's point of view, might call attention to a condition of things worth while noting.

If we know what we are, we have then no excuse of ignorance for not striving to attain to what we might be. With this end in view, I think, to remove the veil, as far as possible, from the lives of society men may be wise. As it has been a delicate and difficult task to accomplish, however, without giving offence, I can only hope I have partially succeeded. In any event, I am assured of the absolute fidelity to nature of the incidents here related, and, in addition, I can assure the reader of my earnest desire that the book may accomplish good results.

BLANCHE CONSCIENCE.

FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK,
May 15, 1887.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

MRS. HAWTONE'S BALL, ... 13

CHAPTER II.

AN ABUSE OF HOSPITALITY, ... 23

CHAPTER III.

PARIS AND MONACO, ... 30

CHAPTER IV.

UNE AFFAIRE DE CŒUR, ... 49

CHAPTER V.

A LENTEN PARTY, ... 59

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNPLEASANT FIX, ... 76

CHAPTER VII.

A TOUCH FROM THE PAST, ... 86

CHAPTER VIII.

NANTUCKET DAYS, ... 94

CHAPTER IX.

AT NEWPORT, ... 108

CHAPTER X.

PAGE

IN SEARCH OF AMUSEMENT, ... 123

CHAPTER XI.

A FAIR MISSIONARY, ... 139

CHAPTER XII.

A MORAL RELAPSE, ... 155

CHAPTER XIII.

A WELL-BRED ADVENTURER, ... 164

CHAPTER XIV.

METROPOLITAN PLEASURES, ... 179

CHAPTER XV.

A GATHERING OF THE CLANS, ... 196

CHAPTER XVI.

A STAGE HEROINE, ... 213

CHAPTER XVII.

OLD POINT AS A SANCTUARY, ... 230

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALICE'S ANSWER, ... 241

CHAPTER XIX.

A NECESSARY SACRIFICE, ... 255

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

PAGE

"BREAK OFF THE ENGAGEMENT, AT ALL HAZARDS," SHE ANSWERED, ... *Frontispiece.*

ALICE, ... 21

POLLY LAUGHED AS SHE PLACED IT AMONG THE COILS OF HER BLACK HAIR, ... 29

"ANSWER ME TRULY," SHE SAID, ... 97

"DICK, DO YOU BELIEVE IN GOD?" 228

THE CONFESSIONS OF A SOCIETY MAN.

CHAPTER I.

MRS. HAWTONE'S BALL.

"Society became my glittering bride."

I WAS fairly in the swim. I had attended a six o'clock reception, dined with a friend at the Belleview at seven, then made a couple of calls, and afterward stopped in at the opera and heard Patti and Scalchi in one act of "Semiramide." I had then gone to a small and early party, and now, considerably after twelve o'clock, midnight, my coupé stopped at the door of Mrs. Hawtone's residence, on Walnut Street. A canopy had been erected from the doorway down to the pavement, and a handsome rug lay beneath it, so that the dainty satin slippers of Beauty might not be soiled when she left her carriage to enter the house.

Two officers stood on either side to keep back the *curious idlers* who crowded up to see the guests enter.

I emerged from my coupé, and ran lightly up the steps.

Ere my feet reached the last one a colored waiter opened the door, letting out, as he did so, a breath of air laden with the heavy odor of hot-house flowers, and bringing to my ears the strains of Strauss' dreamy music. An excellent orchestra was playing the waltz, "Life and Love."

"Second story back, for gentlemen," said the waiter.

The rooms, as well as the hall-way, were brilliantly lighted, and crowded with guests. Supper had been announced, and a number of loving couples were trying to make a dovecot of the stairway.

I collapsed my opera-hat, and made my way upstairs with a deftness born of experience.

I recognized several of my friends, of both sexes, among the guests.

Agnes Moore, a young *débutante*, spoke to me in the hall-way. Hers was a face singularly attractive and striking to me—particularly in a crowded room. It seemed so pure and sweet.

Belle Manly, the novelist and playwright, held out her hand in a genial way. Had she not been the last one on the stairs, I should not have seen it. It is bad form to shake hands on the way to the dressing-room.

Late as I was, there were a number of other men there who had just arrived. I recall them quite distinctly.

There was Jack Isaacs, a short, blonde man, with full, round face and great mustache, and a head which showed decided inclination to baldness. His mother, of very good Southern family, had married an Israelite of no station. Jack inherited some of the qualities of both—from his mother a gentle demeanor and an ability to dance as well *as any man in* society; from his father, a talent for lending *money at usurious* interest.

Despite his racial qualities Jack's father had not, at his death, left behind him any great fortune—in fact, but very little, so his son was fain to turn his wits to account. Never a man in trouble for a few hundreds lost at the gaming-table but Jack was ready to loan him what he needed—at one hundred and twenty per cent. per annum.

But he was, as someone said, a virtue, because often necessary. It was much more convenient to borrow at usurious rates from Mr. Isaacs, the gentleman, than "Mishter Isaaacs," the uncle, at the sign of the three balls—even if rates were a trifle higher.

With Jack was his chum, Foster Perkins, who was of an uncertain age. He had been in society, time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary. He was tall and rather handsome, with large nose, dark mustache, and a tinge of gray in his hair. He was noted for his genial manners to everyone, and never forgot you once you had been introduced to him.

He had a habit of making the oddest remarks, in which he likened pretty girls to various kinds of birds. It was very difficult to tell whether he was in earnest or only playing the fool. When he was not talking to some pretty girl in a devoted manner he amused himself "playing with the ticker," as the boys called stock-gambling.

There was also in the room Bill Shipley, a queer youth, who was always found at every large entertainment. He was not above five feet in height, with an awkward figure, and a rather boyish face, on which, after years of culture, some two or three hairs had appeared. These he called his mustache. He was laughed at by the girls most unmercifully, but did not know it, and had a most colossal conceit.

All these men I knew quite well.

After I had entered, Roland Randall came in. He was a tall, rather spare man, but immensely powerful. Prolonged dissipation had told on his health, however, and his eyes were sunken and lustreless. He was one of the brightest journalists in town, and could do his column with the best of them. According to current rumor he was the Philadelphia correspondent of "Town Topics." He was of independent means, however, and did not work steadily.

"Here comes Dick Conway," said Bill Shipley, as I came in at the door.

"Hello, Conway, old fellow," said Perkins, "hardly thought you'd be 'round to-night. Heard you and Randall were off on a racket."

"No," I answered, "I stopped yesterday afternoon, and have been sleeping ever since, trying to make up for it. But Randall here can give you later news than I can."

"Why, Dick," said Randall, "you ought to have been ashamed to have gone off and left us so soon."

"Well," said I, "three days and nights of that sort of thing are too much for me; I want to do some work, and also to keep my health."

"You should have seen how sorry Félise was to find you missing last night," he continued; "why, I really believe that girl is fond of you."

I am sorry to say that Randall was not thoroughly sober yet, though he told me he had been down and taken a Turkish bath, which generally rubs out all the liquor in one. I wanted him to go home and "rest," without going down to speak to his hostess.

I am not over-particular about drinking, but I have never yet been intoxicated at an entertainment where there *were ladies,* and I do not like my friends to become so.

Occasionally there is someone who disapproves of such things, in which case she is apt to leave the offender out of her next ball-list.

Randall, I saw, was enough under the influence of liquor to be obstinate. He insisted on my going down-stairs with him, arm-in-arm. I feared that he might make a fool of himself before the evening was over, so I determined to leave him to his own devices.

When we were half-way down the stairs I told him I had forgotten my handkerchief and must go back for it—that I would join him in a few minutes in the room below. I took good care to keep out of his way during the rest of the evening.

It was well I did so, for reasons which I shall hereafter relate.

On securing my imaginary handkerchief I managed to reach the lower floor, after numerous disturbances and apologies regarding the occupants of the stairs.

Mrs. Hawtone was a commanding-looking woman, with a knack for entertaining. She had a capacity for harmonizing discordant elements in society, and making everyone feel at home. She greeted me pleasantly:

"You know so many people, that I feel perfectly justified in leaving you to take care of yourself."

She looked somewhat wearied, and I thought she might wish a drink of ice-water; but I did not want the trouble of going for it, though I desired to show her the attention.

Just then I saw Jack Horn crossing the room. He was a mild youth, and it was his first winter out. I knew that he greatly admired my experience and reputation.

"Horn," I said, "get Mrs. Hawtone a glass of water when you *come down*, won't you?"

Of course he was delighted at the chance of obliging both her and me. Mrs. Hawtone thanked me for the attention. A moment afterward I crossed the room to speak to Ann Houghton.

She was a slight girl and not very pretty, but she had charming manners, a face without much color, and dark hair and eyes. She had a pot of money, too, which made a difference, and she was a great belle.

She wore blue that night, and I thought she looked particularly well. In the rich lace about her neck and bosom a single diamond glittered. Slightly *outré* for so young a girl—but lovely, nevertheless.

She had taken a great fancy to me. I had met her the preceding summer at the seaside. I drove with her, bathed with her, and walked on the beach with her in the moonlight, arm in arm. The night before I returned home we took our last walk together. It was beautiful, dreamy moonlight, and the rays glittered in a golden pathway across the waves like a road leading to the Eldorado of the man who is looking for a rich wife.

I made love to her that night, and she was new to it and believed it all. Well I can remember how she trembled as I kissed her innocent lips.

I had seen much of her this winter, and was endeavoring to hold our relationship as close as possible without actually announcing our engagement.

Jack Isaacs had been paying her much attention lately. He was quite a plausible fellow. I did not intend that he should get any advantage over me in this quarter, however, so I occasionally threw out hints as to his character—not that it was necessary, though. A night or two previously Ann had given him a rebuff, in my presence, which showed *me clearly that* she favored me at his expense.

I leaned over her chair and looked down at her seriously and earnestly, while I told her, in a delicate way, that she was looking well. I have always found that with a girl you have made love to in days past, a seriousness of character has most effect—provided, of course, she cares for you somewhat. Badinage does very well to open an acquaintance with.

I asked her if anyone was serving her with supper, and found that Perkins was waiting on her. I stood by her side and talked earnestly until he came up.

"Ah! Miss Ann," he said, "I had to *chassez* 'round to get you this supper—great jam at the table. Do you know, Miss Ann, I hardly know sometimes whether you are most like only a pansy blossom or a modest violet?"

"Foster," I said, "why don't you get off your favorite one, and say that she resembles a bird of paradise at a picnic?"

I left them, laughing, while I crossed over to speak to Agnes Moore, whom I saw was for one moment unattended, Charlie Walton having gone to get some supper for her.

"I saw you come in," she said; "you are late."

I told her where I had been before coming.

This was Agnes' first winter out. She was just eighteen.

She was of the true blonde type, of medium height, and with a figure that was a marvel of grace and development. Her face was full, with clear brown eyes, and mouth which, smiling, showed a set of even white teeth. There was about her an ease and grace of manner which is born with some women. Her clear, pure eyes, her lips, so sweet and innocent, and her rather pallid, almost transparent skin, made her noticeable among the ordinary faces of society, haggard, careworn, soulless, or unpleasant.

In another state of society, the fact that a man might, some day, have called a being like this his own, would have moved him to purity himself. I could feel certain, however, that this pure girl, in the course of time, would marry some man whom I knew had sown his wild oats with a most liberal hand. I had seen similar cases many a time—twice at least during the few months just passed by, when Lily Manton had wedded Duke Braddon, and Amy Wilson, Nick Burton, both fellows with whom I had been on many a "tear," and who were well known to the men about town as being among "the boys."

Not many weeks back I had given a sleighing party. It was found that the omnibus sleigh provided was not large enough to hold all who came. I offered to drive Agnes in my cutter, and her mother consented, as my father and she were intimate old friends. During the drive we became quite *épris*. I took her into my confidence in many ways, and strove to excite her interest in me.

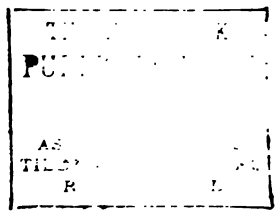
When she said her hands were cold, of course I had to feel them, and if I held them long enough to warm them, it was natural—under the circumstances.

To-night we chatted together for some time, and, finally, I spoke of the pleasant evening we had had on that night we went out sleighing. When I reminded her of the little incident I have spoken of, I could see the blushes mantle her cheeks.

As she stooped over, about to pick up her napkin, which had slipped to the floor on the side farthest from me, a pure white rosebud fell from the bunch at her bosom and dropped at my feet.

I raised both napkin and bud, and returning the former *to her, said*:

"*May I not* keep this rose? In the hard, rude life of



Alice.

men, exposed as we are to temptations, an emblem of purity like this sometimes tends to keep us pure ourselves."

This was well enough as sentiment. But I had a purpose in it. If any rumors of evil behavior, on my part, reached her, she would be more apt to mingle pity with regret. This would help to keep me in her good graces, when, otherwise, I might fall. When a girl pities you for your faults, she will generally forgive them.

Just then Jack Isaacs came up to speak to Agnes, and I left them together.

I was about making my way to the supper-room, when I caught sight of a face which arrested my attention.

It was possessed of all the purity of the one I had just parted from, but was nobler and deeper in its character. I saw that the girl was rather tall and with full, lithe figure, dark brown hair, a classic cast of features, and a mouth of wonderful play of expression.

She could not, in years, have turned twenty.

Fortunately I saw Mrs. Hawtone not far distant, and I crossed over to her. Seeing she was well supplied, I asked her if there was anything which I could procure for her, and then requested her to present me to the young lady I had noticed.

"Miss Carlton, this is Mr. Richard Conway, whom you have probably heard of ere this. Dick, this is one of our belles."

"I have often heard you spoken of as a great favorite in society," she said, as I took a seat near her.

"I fear I do not know you as well as I hope I may in the future," I replied.

We conversed for some time and I found that her mother was dead, and that she herself had just returned from abroad, where she had been completing her education, in

travel, under her father's care. I discovered afterward that she was very wealthy.

Of course we found many topics of mutual interest amid the scenes of the old world, and compared notes as to where we had travelled.

She was a very entertaining and interesting girl, and one of the few I have ever met who could give to the gossip of society a depth of character which seemed to almost dignify it.

After securing her consent to call on her, I made my way to the supper-room.

CHAPTER II.

AN ABUSE OF HOSPITALITY.

"Come, give us a taste of your quality."

I WAS guided in my desires for something eatable by the dull sounds of revelry which came from a large room upstairs. As I drew nearer the noise increased, and by the time I reached the supper-room my ears were assailed by the familiar clink of foaming glasses, and an occasional crash as some unsteady hand dropped a wineglass or plate on the floor—but above all by that earnest buzz of hungry men, each doing his best to feed himself before his neighbor.

The scene would have been well enough at McGettigan's restaurant, but it was hardly suitable for Mrs. Hawtone's supper-rooms. There were no ladies in the room at this time, however; the crowd was too great, and they had betaken themselves to the stairways or reception-rooms.

Champagnes and wines of every kind were flowing freely, and a number of men were already under the influence of

liquor. This was to be seen in their looks, as well as in the number of plates and cut glasses which lay broken under the table—an index, generally, of unsteady hands.

I pushed my way into the crowd of struggling men, some of whom it was very difficult to move from their vantage-grounds near the table—until I was in a position where I could command most of the eatables I wanted.

I supplied myself liberally, and looked about as I ate.

David Lisle and Hartley Beauchamp, two old beaux who, by a long course of training, could drink barrels of liquor without showing it in their manner, were inducing Bertie Marsden to drink again and again—toasting him and making him think he was one of them. Bertie had a poor head for wine, and when he reached a certain point, he did not know what he was doing and drank all the liquor he could reach.

This the old fellows thought was great fun, and the thicker he talked and the more intoxicated he became, the more they plied him with wine.

"Now, it would be great sport," said Beauchamp, "to get him down in the parlor;" and one of them spoke to him, and told him the dancing was beginning again.

There were several young fellows standing about the room, who were not content with drinking champagne from the champagne glasses, but took ordinary goblets. Then they would capture a quart bottle, and carry it to some corner where they would not be disturbed by so many demands to share the spoil.

Some of these I knew as men who would never go to a party unless there was a prospect of drink. As they were, for the most part, leaders in the fashionable set in which *they moved,* some of those who gave entertainments were

coerced into having wine because the "dancing men" would stay away unless it was furnished.

"That is going to be a dry sup, Bill; we won't go."

"It's a place where the food will stick in your throat—let's go 'round to McGettigan's and have a game,"—and so on.

Such expressions were common as to those who did not give wine at their parties.

Roland Randall was, as I have said, rather under the influence of liquor when he came in that night, and now I saw him, across the table, drinking freely. He could not stand much in his present condition, and I was confident that he would be very much intoxicated in a short time.

I had eaten all I wished, and drunk as much as was good for me in present company, and prepared to descend the stairs again. I heard the dance music recommencing.

I have indulged in dissipation of every sort, and I am fond of all kinds of wine, but I have never been intoxicated at a lady's house. I have never imbibed beyond that point where I have perfect control of my physical and mental being. Of course, everyone is more or less exhilarated by liquor, be it ever so little.

If any man says he does not know when liquor is getting control of him, do not believe him. He can generally stop at a certain point if he wishes—at least for the time being. Heavy drinkers you will often find in ball-rooms, and men who get intoxicated; but you seldom see the true sot, and the latter is the only one who cannot resist, if he will, for the time. But I have heard men speak of going to a lady's house with the deliberately formed intention of drinking to excess.

Little is thought of it, however, by the patrons of society; and if a man who becomes intoxicated at one house

is invited to the next entertainment, of course he can see no offence in what he has done.

As a sample of the inconsistency which this failing of men induces, there was Mrs. Wellsby, who is a strict temperance advocate, and would not have wines on her dinner-table, yet who, when her daughter was married, had one of the greatest wine-flows ever known, and several men got under its influence.

It should be said, in the women's favor, that I have generally found that they dislike to have wine at their entertainments, and are pained beyond expression at the results which ensue from its excessive use. But they do not care to bar the men of wealth and station out of their houses, merely because they drink to excess. Eligible men must be provided, both for dancing and marrying; and who so fitted as the men of means and leisure?

Excuse this digression, as you will not expect moralizing from me, even though it has for its basis the testament of society, a much more liberal one, it must be confessed, than that of the serious church-goers. I am not a very moral man, as may be imagined, but I flatter myself that I understand things and people, and the ways of society fairly well.

I was chatting with Mrs. Moore and Agnes, when Randall came up and asked the latter for the pleasure of the next waltz.

I could not well tell her to refuse or plead an engagement as I should have been compelled to lean over her mother who was sitting between us; besides it was not my place to interfere.

Roland was a capital dancer, and, even as it was, succeeded, at first, in guiding and keeping in step fairly well. *Just as I was* congratulating myself, however, that he would

be able to finish the waltz without serious trouble, Bill Shipley, who was an abominable dancer, bumped squarely into him, and down he went on the floor. Fortunately he released his partner, who did not fall.

I at once made my way to them, and requesting Agnes to take my arm, led her back to her mother.

Several men who knew Randall's condition stepped forward and raised him up.

Leaving Agnes with her mother, I joined them. I knew them all.

"Boys," I said, quietly, "take this man to the dressing-room at once, and have one of the waiters take care of him, if necessary."

Joking, and trying to conceal his condition, they led him away.

The dreamy waltz went on, and the dancers, some of whom had stopped for a moment, renewed their pleasure. Most of the men smiled. Roland Randall a little under the weather, that was all.

As soon as I saw Roland led off, I went back to Agnes and her mother, who were both looking grave and annoyed.

"We are so much obliged to you for your kindness," said Mrs. Moore.

"I shall not soon forgive myself for not giving you a hint as to Randall's condition," I said.

Soon they rose to go. While her mother was speaking to Mrs. Hawtone, I found an opportunity to whisper a few words of regret and sympathy in Agnes' ear. Poor little girl! I could see tears in her eyes, so clear and pure, as I left her at the stairs.

This ball was destined to be memorable. The most disagreeable scene was yet to come.

I had danced several times, and on the cessation of the last waltz I was chatting to my partner, when I saw Bertie Marsden enter the room and sit down beside a very pretty girl and begin to talk to her in a maudlin way.

I heard afterward that Beauchamp had gotten him well under the effects of liquor and then persuaded him to go down into the parlor. They wanted to see the fun. Bertie mistook where he was, I fancy, and began to talk in a way not at all befitting the company he was in.

Tom Dickson was the only man who was near enough to hear what he said.

I was watching Bertie and his partner, when I saw a look of disgust and horror cross her face. Then I saw Tom Dickson take a step forward and grasp Bert's shoulders with a vice-like grip. When Bert looked up he met those strong eyes of Tom's gazing at him with a glance which seemed to sober him.

"Come," was all Tom said.

Bert rose and Tom took him forcibly by the arm and led him away to the dressing-room.

I made my adieus to my hostess and followed them.

In the bed-room there was great fun.

A number of the boys, themselves exhilarated with wine, had put both Randall and Marsden to bed, where the two were trying to sing duets together in a maudlin sort of way which was comical in the extreme.

The only man who did not seem to enjoy it was Tom Dickson, who said we acted like a lot of beasts.

Tom had sent for a carriage, and when word came that it had arrived we got Randall and Marsden up from the bed, poured ice-water on their heads, and wrapping them up in their overcoats, with a man on each side of them and *one or two* before and behind as a screen, half led, half car-

Polly laughed as she placed it among the coils of her black hair

ried them down to the carriage, amid their protestations of entire soberness, and sent them home.

We then adjourned round to McGettigan's for a game of cards, at which they "gave me," before morning broke, one hundred dollars.

During the night a girl, whom we all knew as Polly, came in. She was a handsome creature, but reckless in the extreme.

As I stooped over to raise a card which had dropped on the floor, a little white rose fell from my button-hole into the lees of the wine on the table. Polly laughed as she took it up and placed it among the coils of her black hair, where it was indeed very becoming.

It was the rose which had fallen from the bunch at the bosom of Agnes Moore.

CHAPTER III.

PARIS AND MONACO.

"In life's morning march, when my bosom was young."

I AM writing these confessions in my study at my home on Walnut Street.

Let me tell you of the atmosphere which surrounds me.

I have a suite of three rooms here. One I use as a sitting-room and study, one as a bed-room, and the other as a dressing and bath-room. The room between my study and sleeping apartment is hung with rich curtains, the doors being rarely used. The latter room is furnished in light woods, and there are several handsome engravings on the walls—representations of the finest pictures of Detaille and De Neuville. This room, as well as the one I use for dressing in, is a model of comfort and ease; but it is of my study that I am chiefly proud. This is furnished entirely in dark woods, and *richly decorated*. A suit of armor stands in one cor-

ner and in the other an artist's easel; on it a gem of Corot's.

An old-fashioned secretary and a latest style writing-desk, both having every variety of implement of possible use in writing, furnish the means of placing one's own thoughts on paper, or of acquiring those of others.

A collection of ancient arms adorns one wall, while the others are hung with engravings colored by a French process, including "Checkmate" and "Behind the Scenes," with which you may be familiar. There are several oil-paintings also.

I have always had a taste for literature, though I have never indulged it until lately, for, owing to the calls of society, I have had no time. I had this room furnished some time ago, when I made a change in my mode of life, being determined to try my hand at confessing the evils of my former habits.

I have quite a library, too. On my book-shelves are most of the standard novels and poetry; the rest is made up of odds and ends.

Byron's "Don Juan" jeers at Bishop Butler's "Analogy of Religion," while Swinburne's "Laus Veneris" embraces Dymond's "Essays on Morality," and the Koran sits cheek by jowl with the "Decameron" of Boccaccio. So on, through the shelves, you will find medicine, law, theology, etc., somewhat mixed up, it is true, but containing a large amount of information and amusement. The latest numbers of the leading magazines lie about on the table and desks, including *Life*, *Town Topics*, *Century* and *Harper's Magazines*, and various sporting journals.

My rooms are certainly comfortable in the extreme, no money or pains having been spared to make them suitable for my enjoyment; and as I am a somewhat

difficult man to please, you may be sure this means much.

"Dick," said one of friends one day, "you are one of the oddest men I ever met, and I am convinced that you exert a most pernicious influence on society."

"Why so?" I asked.

"You are odd," he answered, "because, while you are one of the 'boys about town,' you are different from all the others, for the reason that you follow a profession, more or less steadily, on principles of the strictest integrity and honor, and your word in such matters is as good as your bond. You seem to have the highest appreciation for all that is intellectual, and can give to a deep subject quite a vein of original thought. You value men according to their worth and ability, no matter in what station of life you find them, and you appear, in a degree, to venerate purity in womankind, though you do nothing to advance it.

"Because of the good qualities I have mentioned, you set a bad example to youth and to your companions generally. They think that if a man of your intelligence can be at the same time one of the fastest and most entirely selfish men in the world, there is no use in leading a moral life. There are few young men, no matter how wealthy, who do not in the beginning have a desire to distinguish themselves in some worthy way; and as youth is prone to deal with facts and not with religion, example is very potent with them. To such as these you do a great injury."

It was Will Deacon who spoke thus. He had been a "boy" himself once, but was now studying theology. We were great friends still, though he talked religion to me when we met now and tried to demonstrate to me the existence of a God, which I generally professed to dis-

believe in, more for the sake of argument than anything else.

But it is time I had explained who I am and given you an account of my early history. I will be as brief as possible, but I think you will not find the recital without excitement or interest.

My father is, or rather was, a prominent banker and broker on Third Street, and numbers among his ancestors three revolutionists who had the temerity to sign that radical document, the Declaration of Independence. This, of course, raises him to the loftiest social heights.

My mother was of Quaker extraction, belonging to an old and eminently respectable family of the City of Brotherly Love. She died in bringing me into the world. Deacon says that it is by reason of her death that I have become so selfish and worldly. A mother's love and care, he asserts, are the main elements in forming a man's character.

On my mother's death, my father's spinster sister came to live with us, and it was under her care that I was reared in early youth. That was twenty years ago and more, and Aunt Jane is an old woman now; but at that time she was just at the age where she thought she knew more than anyone else about bringing up children, and I reaped the benefit of all her thoughts on the subject.

I was somewhat in the position of a young doctor's only patient, upon whom the enterprising man tries every variety of medicine to study the effects.

Her chief idea, however, of a boy's life was to have him sit by her side in a manner most prim during a large part of the day.

While I was at home, under her instruction, this constituted the greater part of my existence; but when I reached the age of ten I was sent to school, and then a new life

was opened to me. As is usual in such cases I changed from one of the most prim and proper boys to what was called the worst boy in school. By the time I had gained this enviable reputation I was probably fifteen years of age. When I say "worst boy in the school," I refer to my reputation as to behavior. In my studies I was at all times, at or near, the head of my class.

Father, or "the governor," as I usually called him, did not appear to trouble himself greatly about my behavior so long as I was proficient in my studies.

He was a rather distinguished man in appearance. He was fifty-five years of age, of medium height, and heavily built. He had a stern face and a determined mouth, and wore a full but neatly trimmed beard. His hair was here and there flecked with gray, but, on the whole, he was a well preserved man for his age.

He was strangely taciturn, rarely conversing with me, and greeting my attempts at conversation with a series of "Humphs," which might have indicated pleasure or annoyance. Complaints about my bad behavior, which sometimes reached his ears, he treated in the same way, and rarely reproved or commended me. When he did so it was in a word or two which carried little weight with them.

He was devoted to his business, and, so far as I could see, was coining money, and he supplied me liberally. He had told me once, when in a particularly confidential mood, that I need not worry as to the future, so far as money was concerned, as he was able to supply enough for both.

After all, I presume he was not so different from the average American father in his station of life, who lets his children grow up, hap-hazard, under their mother's charge, if she is living, and, if she dies, under the care of a relation or housekeeper.

A boy's life is much the same everywhere. The marble season, the top season, the "pussy" season come round with the same regularity as the play, the opera, and the ball season come to us when we grow older. My boyhood had about it little worthy of mention.

Physically I was brave, and, while not as strong as many of my age, I soon came to be known as a fighter, and grew to be feared and admired for my prowess. Mentally I was strong, as I have said, and held my own with the best of the scholars in the school, though, of course, my bad behavior lessened my average. Morally I was weak. My aunt's inquisition methods had not helped to strengthen me in this way. But boys, as Deacon says, are not much given to theory on such subjects; facts are what they see, and hence I did not miss this latter virtue much—or shall I say "lack of" in place of "latter?"

I learned, after many pangs, to smoke cigars, and acquired, with great ease, a vocabulary of oaths of more or less strength. With my talents and wealth I became the "cock of the walk," as the boys say, and grew much accustomed to having things the way I wished them or knowing the reason why.

With girls I had little to do, though I always admired and respected them. It was in my sixteenth year that my first *affaire du cœur* took place.

I was walking home alone from school one day, when I saw, just ahead of me, a golden-haired little girl about to cross a side street. At that moment a fiery and almost unmanageable horse, attached to a heavy wagon, turned down from the main avenue. The girl stopped and seemed in doubt whether to advance or step back. In another instant she would have been crushed beneath the animal's hoofs. I sprang forward and grasping her about the

waist drew her backward just in time to save her from death.

Owing to this incident, Lily Minton and I became very dear friends. She admired my address and bravery, and every pure feeling of my boyish heart went out to this bright girl. I saw much of her during the two or three months following the incident which I have just related. We never had a harsh word or a quarrel of any kind. But the poor little girl fell ill and grew steadily worse. One day they sent for me. She wished to see me and bid me farewell. I can remember well the day I stood by her bedside, and in a low whisper she bade me good-by forever. Next day they told me she was dead. This has been to me the greatest sorrow I have ever known.

My father determined to give me a thorough education, and in my seventeenth year sent me abroad.

It was arranged that I was to spend two years in England at school, and then travel for about the same length of time on the continent.

At the boys' boarding-school in England I added to my other accomplishments boxing, fencing, gambling, and drinking to excess, becoming a proficient in them all.

I grew to be a favorite among the jolly fellows of the college, and was admired by the more staid for my mental qualities. There was rarely an examination at which I did not take a prize of some kind. I acquired there a habit which clings to me still—that of neglecting work until the last moment, and then striving at it all day and night to make up the lost time.

A number of the fellows purchased a rope-ladder, and we used to lower ourselves out of the windows and then steal away and spend the night in the county-town, about *two miles away*, drinking and gaming until morning.

I had been at the college some six months when, on the recurrence of the holidays, a number of fellows and myself went down to London for a fortnight. We were all from other countries, and though many of us, including myself, had invitations to stay at the houses of our English friends, we preferred to take rooms so that we might be free as to our times of entrance and exit.

Few people have seen so much of London in as short a time. Parts of our days were spent in galleries and museums, while night after night found us bent on new schemes of dissipation. The theatres, Vauxhall, Cremorne, and the Argyle found in us constant patrons.

It was in this round of enjoyment that I made the near acquaintance of those social pleasures and vices, the indulgence in which distinguishes the man from the boy. In that joy of early manhood, when novelty is life, they gained a fixed hold on me, which could not be easily relaxed.

I may say here that I am very familiar with fast life in our own country, as well as abroad, and it is certain that the moral degradation to be found in London and Paris, as well as other continental cities, is simply appalling. It seems to form a very part of life there, and a young and single man who does not scoff at purity in women and boast of his *affaires* is a curiosity. I say this advisedly, and certainly no one who knows me will accuse me of being over-particular about such subjects.

Two years at college quickly passed, and in company with a mutual friend I started to explore the continent.

"Dear old Paree," as the American *parvenu* calls it, was our first destination after a short stay in London.

On our arrival there we carefully explored the places of public resort of all kinds, more particularly those of a lighter character. The *cafés chantants* and the salles de

danse found in us regular attendants, and we soon grew familiar with the gay side of Parisian life.

It may be thought that this sort of existence made demands on my health, and it did. But I have always made it a practice to give Nature a chance to recover. After a week of drinking, gaming, and late hours, I would lie by, and take the most thorough rest—dieting carefully and sleeping long to make up for lost hours, and generally giving the utmost care to my health. I have thus been enabled to endure much that might otherwise have broken me down.

The life we led in Paris was not such as is worth while to describe in detail. There was one occurrence, however, which may prove interesting.

My friend and I were just about leaving a gambling saloon on the Rue St. Honoré one night when we noticed a girl of rather petite figure come in a side door and look inquiringly about. Her face was veiled, but judging from her manner she was confused at the appearance of the rooms and the men there.

A group of men standing chatting together noticed her at once, and several moved toward her. I saw her shrink back. One of the men, a large man and a Frenchman, stepped up to her and spoke to her. She drew back and appeared much agitated. The man then tried to remove her veil, and she uttered a suppressed scream.

It was rather an odd place for a scrupulous woman, but I thought the man's behavior was rather ill-advised under the circumstances, and I started forward.

My friend attempted to dissuade me from interfering.

"This crowd will all be against you if you get into a row," he said.

In a moment I caught the Frenchman's arm as he grasped

the girl's veil, and I twisted it violently, at the same time forcing it upward and backward, until I could hear the muscles crack. At the same time I said:

"Pourquoi ne laissez-vous pas la fille tranquille?"

He let out a volley of French oaths, and raised the cane which he held in his other hand to strike me.

I had with me a heavy rosewood cane, which I lifted *en garde*, parried the blow which he made at me, and then, whirling my cane above my head, brought it down on his own with such force as to break it in two and knock the pieces across the room.

At this all his friends advanced on me with the evident intention of taking his part. Frenchmen, I think, have learned something of how to conduct bar-room rows such as Americans are familiar with.

People in the inner rooms, attracted by the noise, came pouring out to see what was the trouble.

I did not care to enter into a quarrel with them, as I knew their sympathies would be against me, and looked about for some means of escape.

The door at which the girl had entered was just behind me and was open. Through it she had disappeared.

I stepped through the doorway and slammed the door in the faces of my pursuers. It was pitch dark, and I ran my hand up the edge of the door to feel if I could not find a lock. In an instant I touched cold iron and turned the key. At the same moment I heard a cry of rage from those who were following me.

Then I felt a soft hand in my own, while a voice said:

"Ici, monsieur."

I followed along a dark passage. In a few moments we came out into a side street at the back of the house.

"*Maintenant vous êtes* sain et sauf," said my companion.

"Allez vite par cette rue, tournez à gauche, et vous les éviterez facilement."

"Et vous?" I asked.

"Voici ma voiture!" she answered, pointing to a cab.

In vain I entreated her to let me stay and protect her.

"Je vous remercie bien, monsieur," she said; "n'ayez pas de peur par rapport à moi."

Then, as though fearing I might become too importunate, she opened the door of the cab, gave some hurried direction to the driver as she did so, closed the door before I could follow, and in another moment the vehicle was rattling down the street.

I made good my escape and reached the hotel in safety. I could never discover who the girl was, though I made some inquiry. Someone, likely, who was coming after an old father—a slave of the gaming-table.

My friend and I travelled over a large part of Europe together, but our adventures were not of more than ordinary interest, and it is not my intention to make this a book of travels.

As I have told you, I became somewhat an expert as far as gambling went, and grew deeply interested in all games of chance. So far, however, I had never played heavily, but I said to my friend several times during the course of our trip that I fully intended to break the finances of the Prince of Monaco when we reached that famous place. We intended to postpone our visit there until we were homeward bound.

When two young fellows with plenty of money and nothing to do save enjoy themselves get under the soft skies of Italy and in the light of the dark eyes of her daughters, they are apt to let time slip away unnoticed. Had it not *been for a letter* which I received from father, couched in

such terms as would have made disobedience rebellion, it is difficult to say when I should have returned. It was seldom that he took any very positive stand; when he did I found it wise to humor him.

My father had been liberal in honoring all my large drafts on him; and by drawing far larger sums than I needed for the expenses of travelling I had been able to save quite a large sum.

It was a glorious Italian day when we reached the rock-bound capital of the smallest principality in the world.

We had planned to stay at Monte Carlo three days only, then go back to Paris and London, and so home.

We put up at the Hotel de Paris, and the evening of our arrival visited the Casino.

We sauntered slowly through the beautiful grounds about the building devoted to the game. The path leading thither was delightful; no one could feel fatigued, so carefully were the inclines softened and so smooth the walks.

It was a perfect picture; roses, anemones, geraniums, carnations bloomed everywhere, and great, dense masses of exotics hedged the walks about. Looking toward the ocean, too, the view was charming. The sea was of the deep blue which the Mediterranean so often bears, but was tinged with the light of the setting sun, which touched with gold the sails of the picturesque fishing-boats lazily floating about the bay.

But few, if any, besides ourselves, of those who made their way toward the Casino paid any attention to the beauties of the scene. They were making calculations, racking their brains for a new martingale, or trying to conceive a "system."

We registered our names, and after securing cards of admission entered.

Within was an interesting scene.

The rooms devoted to the game were splendid *salons*, brilliantly lighted by numerous chandeliers, and the walls were magnificently decorated. Their sole furniture consisted of the tables at which the games were played and the chairs for the participants.

About the tables there were grouped the players bearing that quiet yet nervous manner which the excitement of gambling produces. Numbers who were not engaged in play stood behind the others, watching, with tranquil interest, the course of the game.

The silence was remarkable. There was no sound save the suppressed breathing of the players, the calls of the croupiers, and the clink of the gold pieces as they were raked in shining heaps in front of the players or taken into the care of the banker.

This quietness is one of the things which add to the impressiveness and interest of the game to both those who play and those who merely look on. Then, too, the manner of play, the seeming absence of any opportunity for deception by the banker, and the variety of chances which can be taken make it particularly attractive, as well to the old player as to the novice.

In addition to this, if you merely go as a looker-on, you can get an excellent opportunity to study human nature.

As I glanced round the tables I could distinguish among the players men of all nationalities, all professions, and all ages. Next to a Russian was a Frenchman, beside an Englishman was a German, next to him a Turk and a Greek. A prince elbowed a wealthy tradesman, an old police magistrate sat beside a thief, and a lady of noble family had for her neighbor one of her own sex whose reputation was not above suspicion. No one of them seemed disturbed,

however, at the peculiarities of his neighbors. Each was absorbed in his calculations and had eyes only to follow the little ivory ball which turned round in the roulette. One feature the faces bore in common—that was the wrinkle of anxiety and disappointment.

I wish I had more space to describe to you the peculiarities of the various players who were grouped about the tables, but the subject would prove almost endless.

The whirl of the wheel, the rattle of the ball, and the sing-song of the croupier, "Faites vous votre jeu, messieurs. Le jeu est fait, rien ne va plus." The play of expression and the difference of manner of the players over their gains and losses were so novel and interesting that for a time I did not think of trying the chances myself.

At last, however, as a favorable opportunity offered, I took my seat at one of the tables.

I played carelessly at first on the *rouge* or *noir*, the *passe* or *manque*, and the *pair* or *impair* by turns, and then after a time on the *colonnes*. I seldom risked more than a louis.

After playing here for awhile I strolled on into the second or *trente et quarante* room, where the stakes were larger, but I did not play.

I merely wanted to get my hand in, as it were. At the closing of the rooms I found I had lost about fifty dollars in all. This was certainly not the way to break the bank.

Next day we saw what was to be seen of the limited principality, dined late, and then repaired to the tables.

I can remember the events of that night very clearly.

As soon as I entered the *trente et quarante* room I noticed sitting at one end of the tables a remarkably handsome woman. Her form, while almost incurring the imputation of stoutness, was of exceedingly graceful contour. Her face was almost classic in its dignity, and her dark

raven hair was twisted in great glossy coils about her head. Her eyes and mouth would have been beautiful save for the dark lines and hunted look about the former and the fixedness of the latter.

She was intent on the game and did not notice me as I took my place behind her and stood watching her play. She played entirely on the numbers, never once trying the other chances. The small pile of gold which she had in front of her when I came up disappeared piece by piece. As yet I had not seen her win once.

A white-haired, narrow-faced old man was seated next to her. Presently his last piece was taken, and he arose with trembling hands and tottering form and passed out.

I took the seat which he vacated by the side of the pretty woman.

I tossed a napoleon across the table intending that it should fall on zero. I exerted too much muscle, however, and the coin rolled over and rattled into the wheel.

The banker scowled as he returned my piece, and all the players about the tables looked disturbed. There was a peevish, nervous look about them, like that of a person suddenly aroused from a slumber into which he has but just fallen.

The woman at my side glanced at me and seemed to find some attraction in my face or manner, as I noticed her several times eyeing me intently during the intervals of play.

We were at the end of the table. I played the *colonnes*, at first, and met with varying luck. After a time I began to steadily lose. This continued until I had lost about five hundred dollars.

Then I placed a sum equal to about one-third of the *whole amount* I had lost on the middle column.

The wheel turned, the ball rattled and fell into No. 5, and the sum was trebled. I was square again. I allowed the whole to remain as a wager on the same number.

Again play was made and this time the ball rolled into No. 35. My pile was again trebled.

Just at this moment I saw that in the same play in which I had been so successful my fair companion had lost her last napoleon. I saw also that she was about to rise.

I withdrew my winnings from the board. Then I leaned toward my companion and said, quietly, in English:

"Madame, you seem unfortunate. Pray allow me to assist you. To me the fates have been more kind—at least in this last turn."

There was about the woman something commanding and noble, but this was noticeable in her form and manner rather than in her face. Her countenance was attractive, but not altogether pleasing. Her mouth, as I have said, was hard in its outlines, and there was a desperate look in her black eyes.

She did not repulse me, but said, in that half-whisper which was used by everyone:

"*Mon dieu!* what does it matter?"

She spoke in English with the foreign accent of a German.

She took the pile of gold which I passed to her, and was soon deep in the game again.

I rested for awhile on my laurels, watching her, and now and then playing on the *rouge* or *noir*.

She seemed to have a passion for playing on single numbers, and steadily lost, until of the sum I had given her she had but a louis left. This she placed on the number seven, and in a moment afterward she had thirty-six times that

amount in front of her. Then she went on, as before, losing steadily.

Seeing that she was in a position to be occupied for some time I renewed my play for higher sums than before, and with varying fortunes.

For hours we sat thus, not moving save to make our plays. Luck at last accompanied me steadily, so much so that many of the other players followed my lead. I did not play heavily, but my success in winning was remarkable.

At last I saw that my fair friend had again but one piece left. As she staked it on the number thirty-six I played all the money I had on the other side column. The sum I had staked was about three hundred dollars.

She lost, I won.

I saw that she was about to rise. I placed the whole of my winnings on the middle column. She stayed to watch my play.

I won again.

I was deeply excited. I did not wish to leave the tables without winning deeply or losing all I had, and yet I wanted to keep sight of this woman, who somehow had a great attraction for me. Then, too, I was desirous of creating a sensation.

The other players about the table still followed my play. I placed the whole of my winnings on zero. If I won the bank would probably be broken. My bet alone was within a few francs of the highest bet allowed in the building. That of the other players was also enormous. If I lost I should be compelled to borrow money to go home on.

"Faites votre jeu, messieurs."

The wheel whirled round, the ball rattled.

"Le jeu est fait, rien ne va plus."

The ball fell into zero. I had won.

"Messieurs, the bank is closed for to-night."

I exchanged my earnings for paper money, and then looked about for the lady who had sat beside me. She was not to be seen.

My travelling companion had returned to the hotel some time before with a mutual friend, so I strolled forth alone.

I was walking back to the hotel musing on my great good fortune, when just as I was about leaving the grounds of the Casino a woman came toward me from the tropical plants. I at once recognized in her my friend of the tables.

"I want to thank you, monsieur," she said, "for your loan, though you see it was of no avail. I have nothing now to pay you with save this," and she held out to me a jewelled ring.

"I cannot accept this in payment," said I. "My loan was made without any expectation of return. Besides, mine was from plenty, while yours——" I stopped.

"Is from poverty," she added. "Nay, monsieur, take the ring, not as a payment, but as a memory of me," and she forced it into my hand.

I attempted to detain her small hand in mine, but she quickly withdrew it, and took a step backward. Her hand made a movement toward her bosom, and in a moment came the crack of a pistol and she fell at my feet.

Several people rushed up and saw her lying with the pistol in her hand.

We raised her up, but found she was quite dead.

I learned that she was a woman of noble family who had acquired a passion for gaming. This had brought her so low that the end was natural.

It was some days ere I was allowed to go my way, but suicides at Monte Carlo are so common as to create but little excitement.

When I was released I did not try the tables again. I was more than satisfied with my fortune.

In a month I was at home again.

CHAPTER IV.

UNE AFFAIRE DE CŒUR.

"Lest that thy love likewise prove variable."

SOON after my return from abroad my father informed me, in his short way, that he desired me to study for some profession. The choice he left to me. I had taken a prize for oratory at the English school, and I was always a fluent talker. I had, I thought, somewhat of a talent for public speaking, and therefore determined to study law. My preceptor, however, like most teachers of the science of reason, was so much occupied with the practice that he found but little time for the instruction of his students in the theory of the subject.

Sometimes I would not be seen at the office for several days. When I did come down, it was generally only for an hour or two, during which I read the daily papers or a light novel, and I then strolled up town. Time enough to study, I thought, when examination drew near.

After two years of the *dolce far niente* which I had enjoyed, it was too much to expect that I should settle down

at once to a life of study and toil. I have found true by experience what has become a trite saying, that we are the creatures of habit, whether good or bad.

I was soon in the whirl of society, and, of course, with my social standing as it was, I was invited everywhere. The money which I had won at the gaming-table enabled me, for a long time, to keep up an appearance of great wealth, and this, now, is even a surer key to open the doors of the halls of fashionable society than that which may be held in the mailed hand of some knightly ancestor.

I think I may say, without egotism, that I was a great favorite with the opposite sex. Nor was it to be wondered at. I had, or at least was reputed to have, wealth ; and it was certain that I had station. As to my personal appearance, it would not be modest for me to go into detail. In build I am slender, and not much over the average height. You would not imagine, to look at me, that I am strong, but I am wiry and possessed of great endurance. My face is of a clear-cut type, and my mouth perhaps what might be called sensual, and almost covered by a long mustache. I have the air of a man of the world, and my experience has given me a *savoir-faire* beyond my age. I was, as a consequence, at the time I speak of, much sought after by the fair sex.

My experience with women so far had been quite limited. When I left home I was too young to have known many outside of my own family and near neighbors, and in Europe I had only met those who are in the society frequented by people who go abroad to see life. With the pure and cultivated I was unfamiliar, for I had had but little opportunity for association with them.

It must not be thought, however, that my life in Europe

had lessened my appreciation of the sex. To be sure, as I have before stated, women are not considered with the same respect abroad as in our own country ; but innately I retained much of my admiration for their purity. I think it is a mistake to say that fast men do not retain their respect for a pure woman. They certainly demand it of those whom they marry.

I do not deny that a fast life has a tendency to degrade the feelings somewhat, but its effects are oftentimes much exaggerated.

On my entry into the society of my native city I met many charming women, and made great friends of them.

One of the first girls I came to know thus was Bonnie Lyman. She had just entered society. She was a sweet child, with a trim, nicely-formed figure, though not so full in contour as I admired.

Her face, while not handsome, had something winning about it; her hair was so dark as to be almost black, and her eyes hazel. There was a gentle consideration about her manner to others which charmed me for a time, and I fell quite in love with her.

She was the leading spirit in organizing some theatricals for the benefit of a poor family which she had discovered somewhere in the slums, and it was while carrying on this entertainment that I first met her.

As the spring came on we rode or drove together, and on Sundays took long walks out into our matchless park.

She liked me very well, I could see, and would talk to me about my plans in life, and urge me to strive for success in my profession. When a girl begins to take that sort of an interest in a man which looks to his future, she is generally in earnest.

Of course, under these circumstances, I could not resist

the desire to make love to her—it is such an easy thing to do.

A lingering hand-shake now and then, a warm grasp which seems to loosen only because of necessity; when you meet and part, a tender look into eyes that look again, as though there lay the goal of your future; an affectionate affix to her name when no one is about to remark it; a possessory sort of a clasp in the waltz, and even a salutation, on favorable opportunity, which savors of cousinship at least—these are pleasant and easy ways of love-making, and may mean so little if one's mind changes.

Thus did I grow deeply interested in Bonnie Lyman.

She was said to be very wealthy in her own right, which was another point in her favor.

My father one day broke the silence which usually enveloped him by speaking to me of my waste of time.

"Dick," he said, finally, "why don't you get married? It would tend to settle you down and fit you for work."

"I am thinking about it," I answered. "What will you do for me if I do? I mean as to starting a house and keeping it up."

"Oh!" he answered, "marry a girl with money. I can point to several who are worth the winning on that consideration. With your station and looks you should be able to marry one of them."

This was given out in a thoughtful kind of way, amid a series of "Humphs!"

"I will see," I replied.

Next morning at breakfast I said to father:

"By the by, do you know from whom Miss Lyman—Bonnie Lyman—the daughter of your old friend, Will Lyman, inherits her wealth, which she is said to have in her own right?"

"From her grandmother, old Mrs. Benton, who died some ten years ago," he replied.

"What was her first name?" I inquired.

"Martha, I think," he answered. "Why do you inquire?"

"Oh! only curiosity," I replied.

As I strolled down-town that day I stopped in at the Register of Wills office and took down the index of wills. Looking back for about ten years among the "B's," I at last discovered the name of Martha C. Benton. When I found the number of the will I asked the clerk to get it for me out of the fire-proof vault in which it was kept.

I turned the pages of the document over. After a number of minor bequests, I came to the portion in which I was chiefly interested. It read as follows:

"To my granddaughter, Bonnie Y. Lyman, I give, devise, and bequeath all the rest, residue, and remainder of my property of whatsoever description and wheresoever situated."

I handed the will back to the clerk and proceeded down-town.

You may think it was an odd and not strictly an ingenuous thing for me to do to examine the will in this way, but I assure you it is quite a customary matter—among young lawyers particularly—to hunt up the wills under which their friends among the gentler sex are left legacies. Indeed, I knew one young man who kept a note-book—a sort of ready-reference diary—in which he had a list of girls who were wealthy. When he saw the death noted of the father or mother of one of his friends, he would stop in at the register's a day or two after the funeral and get the facts from the will. Then, if worth while, he would follow it up by examining the inventory, and afterward, when the

estate was settled, the account filed in the Orphans' Court.

In this way he kept himself posted, and could give you the exact figures of a girl's pecuniary value.

One of the first retainers I received was from young Harold Manon, who wanted me to trace out the financial standing of a girl he was paying attention to.

"Of course, I love her, don't ye know, but I couldn't marry her if she's not wealthy, you see," he said.

I met Bonnie often after I had seen her grandmother's will.

What a temptation it must be to a poor man to try and win a rich girl, for even I, who was not poor, at least in prospects, found this girl twice—nay, ten times—as attractive since I had been convinced, by reading the will, of her wealth.

I knew Bonnie loved ne, and I about concluded to marry her. A year later I should have perhaps contemplated engaging myself to her, but would not have considered marriage for the near future.

At this sort of thing I was somewhat new, and while it was comparatively easy to come to a decision, it was difficult to put my desires in words.

One evening, however, after sitting for some time talking together, I reached the point after several false starts.

"Bonnie," I said, "I want to tell you something and ask you a question."

She was knitting some fancy-work, and when I began my voice sounded so hollow and earnest that she knew at once what was coming, and I could see her hands tremble as she ceased work.

I had prepared a beautiful speech, but somehow it did

not come very fluently. I succeeded, however, in expressing myself fairly well.

"Bonnie," I continued, "I love you. I have wanted to tell you so for many days, but waited until I could do so feeling that I could never change. I know you think me a careless fellow, and I have not very much to offer you save youth and hope and love; but if you think you can love me with these, I will do all I can to make you happy."

She was silent for almost a minute, it seemed to me, and then I said, again:

"What is your answer?"

She glanced at me demurely, and her eyes met mine with a look that love alone can give.

"Dick," she said, "I certainly love you."

A moment after she was in my arms, and I kissed her cheek, which felt rather cold, I thought.

But there are worse things than love-making. One of them is speaking to parents, and both of Bonnie's were living.

As I did not know either of them very well, it was arranged that she was to break the news to them that night or next day, and that I was to come up and see her two days after, which would be Sunday.

On that day I was present and sent up my card.

Mrs. Lyman came down. She was a good-looking old lady, but rather peculiar in her manners.

She greeted me coldly.

"Bonnie is not well, and you will have to excuse her this afternoon, Mr. Conway," she said, and then continued: "I want to speak to you about the events of the past week. Mr. Lyman and myself were both much astonished at our daughter's announcement, and after consideration

we have to tell you that we refuse our consent to any engagement between Bonnie and yourself."

This was not a favorable beginning. I was not really deeply affected by the news, but I wanted to seem earnest. I assumed an expression of despair, but said little.

"Why is this?" I asked, after a pause.

"We know nothing about you, really, but, so far as we are informed, you are not in a position to support Bonnie in the way in which she has been brought up. Besides, both you and Bonnie are too young, in our opinion, and we are both opposed to it."

"What does Bon—Miss Lyman say to this?" I queried.

"She is quite willing to be guided by our opinion."

I leaned my head in my hands and groaned in a melodramatic way, and sat thus for some time. I was thinking to myself what a farce it was, but I determined to carry my heavy business through.

Just then came a ring at the door-bell. Mrs. Lyman saw the servant before she reached the door, and told her to say to any callers that Bonnie was not well, and that Mrs. Lyman was not at home.

When the servant opened the door I heard the voice of Jennie Daron (dead now, poor girl) inquiring for Bonnie.

It was fortunate that the servant had been notified, as it averted a *contretemps*, perhaps.

"If you would like to see Mr. Lyman," said the old lady after a time, "I will send him down to you."

I assented, and she left me, being in a little while replaced by Mr. Lyman.

He was a jolly old fellow, so long as it was not a question of pocket. He was very wealthy, but one of the closest men in town.

"*In the first* place," he said, "I know but little about

your character, but what I have heard, though based on rumor, is that you are a rather fast young man. My daughter is very young and not physically strong, and you are both too young to think of marriage. Then, I do not think you are in a position to support a wife, and I can assure you she has very little of her own. You may have heard that her grandmother left her a fortune, but this consisted of about two thousand dollars, and I am not in a position to give her anything. Finally, I must absolutely refuse my consent."

I felt that under all the circumstances it would be a wise move for me to be well out of the engagement. I put on my most dignified manner.

"Very well, Mr. Lyman," I said, "I do not consider this treatment of me very courteous, to say the least. I am not a boy, and I tell you, sir, you are unfair and ungentlemanly. If your daughter is unhappy hereafter, blame it on yourself, and not on me."

I took up my hat and cane.

"You are excited, but you will think better of this after a time," said the old man.

"Good-day, sir," I answered, ignoring his remark, as I slammed the door after me.

On reaching home I wrote Bonnie a note, in which I stated that her parents had refused their consent, and had informed me that what they wished was her wish also. I told her it was better, under the circumstances, that our engagement should not be continued, but that, although her parents had treated me most shamefully, I hoped, should we meet again, we should be friends.

I received an answer from her on the following day, in which she expressed her love for me, denied that she wished to be released, and said, further, that her parents did not

mean to prevent my calling, occasionally, and keeping up our friendship. In conclusion, she asked me to meet her at Mrs. Williams' reception the following afternoon.

By this time I had begun to regret having gone as far as I had in the matter. I concluded that I had really seen too little of life through the eyes of single existence, and that it would be very foolish in me to tie myself down by bonds of engagement or marriage. Then, too, there was no money in the contract proposed, and it might therefore be considered void for want of consideration.

I wrote Bonnie, in reply to her note, saying that her parents had treated me most abominably, and that I was not disposed to act under their arbitrary restrictions. I thought it was better, therefore, to consider our engagement at an end. I hoped she would always believe me her friend.

To this note she did not reply.

When I met her afterward in society she avoided me as much as possible; but it was hard for her to refuse to recognize me when I would go up to her at a ball while several men were talking to her, and insist by my manner and conversation that she should consider me her friend.

We never really regained our old basis of relationship, but it seems to me that this was owing to her fault.

CHAPTER V.

A LENTEN PARTY.

"Ay, Richard, second love is best."

LIFE for me, after the trifling episode just related, went on in much the same way, excepting, perhaps, that it was rather less regular, and that I indulged in men's enjoyments to a greater extent than before. I became a great favorite with the society men of the circle in which I moved, and in their company sounded many of the depths of fast life in a large city. I was soon known as one of the "boys." It is somewhat difficult to define the exact meaning of this word, but with us it was used to designate the men who were found at all the balls and parties, who could drink unlimited liquor, game all night, and then afford to lie abed in the morning and sleep off the effects. I do not mean to say that all society men came within the definition, but, as a matter of fact, a man, to really keep in the swim, must needs have time to recuperate, and it was the men of means and leisure who, to the much larger extent, composed the leaders as well *as the rank* and file of the great army. How

many men of means and leisure in society live moral lives? I do not think I have, in a wide and long experience, met more than two.

Roland Randall, at this time, became quite an associate of mine, though I cannot say he was to any great extent a friend. He carried his pleasures to too great an extreme to suit me.

I met Jack Isaacs also when I became one of the young men about town. He was the man, as I have said, who was always ready to lend money to his friends—on good security, at one hundred and twenty per cent. per annum. He did not dissipate violently, but was to be found about card-rooms and clubs late at night, with a supply of ready cash in his pockets. One night, when we were playing roulette in a Sansom Street house and I had lost heavily, I borrowed some money from Roland. But soon he, too, was drained of all his ready cash.

"Never mind," he said, "Jack Isaacs will be here in half an hour, and he will lend us all we need."

Sure enough, Mr. Isaacs turned up shortly afterward, and Roland introduced me.

"If he should want to borrow from you, Jack," he said, "he is all right for any amount he may ask for, and you will need no order on his salary or a promissory."

I borrowed fifty dollars from this society money-lender, and paid him fifty-five one week later.

I had now been studying law for over a year and six months, and in a few months I should be enabled to come up for my examination under the rules of the Bar.

I did not propose to slip up on my examination; I had too much pride to allow that to occur, and from an existence of pure amusement I changed to hard study.

I began a thorough preparation. My object was to pass

successfully, and, of course, in the limited time I had to go over the subjects, I was compelled to "cram" superficially, but even to do that was a work of no little trouble.

I gave up drinking to excess, and wasted no time at the gaming-table, but morning and night pursued my studies, only allowing myself relaxation and exercise enough to keep me in good health.

I have a very retentive memory for a short time, and when I came up for examination a few months later I answered all the questions correctly, save three or four. The members of the Board complimented me on my proficiency.

I was greatly aided in my preparation by Tom Dickson, whose law-office was next that of my preceptor.

Tom was a man of about my own age, and an only son. His father was dead, but his mother was still alive, and they lived in a grand house on Chestnut Street. Tom was wealthy in his own right, and was well known in society. The money constituting his fortune had been left to him three or four years before he attained his majority, but he had resisted the inducements to a life of pleasure, and had studied law and been admitted to the Bar. He had a reputation as a bright man, and was one of the few men I knew in society whom I would have been glad to see marry a sister of mine, had I possessed one.

Tom was quite a society man, and was generally found at prominent entertainments when they did not come into conflict with his business engagements. He was neither a heavy drinker nor a gambler, and led, so far as we knew, a moral life.

He took rather a fancy to me. I have, of course, a rather general knowledge of men and affairs of the world, and we had many interesting discussions and conversations from time to time. I grew to like him very well. It is a pleasure,

sometimes, to a society man to talk to one who understands a few matters besides the merits of wine or the science of cards. To Tom, as I have said, I was much indebted for assistance in my law studies.

I celebrated my admission to the Bar by indulging in several days' continuous carousing, and I was just recovering from the effects of this at the time I attended Mrs. Hawtone's reception, of which I told you in the first chapter.

This ball which she gave was one of the grandest affairs of the season, being held just before the advent of Lent.

The unfortunate episodes which occurred at her house were the talk of society for awhile, until something of a similar nature occurred to distract attention.

I told you of having met Miss Alice Carlton there. I called on her several times, shortly after, and found her a very interesting girl, but one whom it was rather difficult to make friends with. She was somewhat disposed to look at the serious side of life, and I therefore made it a practice to talk of subjects of kindred interest to her. I think I made a favorable impression on her at the first.

I am a firm believer in the affinities of natures and souls. As I walk the street I may pass a number of women whom I recognize at once as being beautiful and attractive in face and form, yet I know that to me they will be nothing more than what they prove themselves by their wit or beauty; but behind them may come a figure—it may be a woman of the best breeding, or a working-girl in shabby clothes—and yet with one glance at her form, one look into her eyes, I know that, though I may never see her again, there is an instantaneous attraction of my feelings toward her, like that which chemists know exists between certain bodies *which are brought* near to each other.

This same feeling, only in a higher degree, I may feel for my friends whom I know well. It was an interest of this nature that I felt for Alice Carlton. But it was a more respectful one than that which animated me with regard to most women. There was something about Alice which repelled the idea of familiarity on slight acquaintance. Not that she was staid, for, on the contrary, she was a thorough society woman, and very jolly in her ways.

I called on her one evening and found that a party consisting of herself, her father, and her aunt were going out to the theatre.

"You are just in time, Mr. Conway," said her father, after we had passed the commonplaces of the occasion. "My son Tom was not able to go to-night, so we have an extra seat."

Of course I accepted; it was too good a chance to be lost, even though I should be compelled to break an engagement to play poker with the boys at 9.30.

It was a pleasant evening, and not far to the theatre, and we all walked there, Alice taking my arm.

We chatted together as we strolled along. I was trying to persuade her to join a party who were going on a trip to the shore during Lent, which was but a few days distant. She said she could not go, as she had an engagement to stay with a friend in Baltimore about the date fixed for our party.

The play was an amusing comedy. We were, however, with many others in the audience, almost as much interested in the occupants of one of the lower proscenium boxes as we were with the play.

Louise Clayton, a not pretty but rather cute-looking girl, who was the *prima donna* of a light opera company which had lately appeared, and some feminine friends of hers,

whose names I did not know, were there, and, of course, at any time would have been objects of attention. To-night, however, the cavalier attendant upon Louise was the chief source of interest.

This was Con Creighton, a tall, dark, handsome man, of about twenty-five years of age or thereabout. He was stout but shapely in form, and had a rather classic cast of countenance. His skin had that rugged, leathery look which is often observed in actors. His hair was black and straight, and worn over his forehead. He had about him a general air of recklessness.

Within the past three months, it was reported that Con had spent thousands of dollars on this girl Louise.

At the time he began his intimacy with her he had been engaged to a charming girl in Boston, but, it was said, became weary of her and adopted this as a means of escape. When his attentions to the actress became notorious, his *fiancée* was compelled to ask him to release her from the engagement, and this he was very willing to do. There were some people in society who thought it would have been more manly on his part to have prayed for a release before he became the follower of the actress, and not to have forced his betrothed into such an unpleasant position and notoriety. At the same time, he was too popular to be dropped by society people for such behavior.

To-night he and his companions seemed to enjoy themselves hugely. He laughed in such a boisterous manner during the course of the play that everyone turned to look at him. Between the acts Louise would laugh and nod to those whom she knew in the audience, or entertain the men who dropped in to her box, Con, in the meanwhile, strolling in the lobby and chatting with his friends over his conquest.

"Con is going with us on our Lenten party," I said, as we returned to Alice's home; "I wonder how he will succeed in tearing himself away from his gay companion."

"Does it not seem odd," Alice said, "that a man like that is admitted everywhere, though he flaunts his evil behavior in the very face of society?"

"Oh! well," I said, "while I don't want you to think that I consider his behavior the correct thing, yet I must say Con is a good fellow at heart. It was only last week he gave fifty dollars to save a poor woman from being turned out in the street by a harsh landlord. In many ways there is not in all this city a more generous man, and he is true to his friends—among men at least. It doesn't do, you know, to draw the line too closely, or we should all be barred out—the men, I mean."

"Well," she replied, musingly, "perhaps I shall understand these things better when I have been longer in society, but it takes me some time to become accustomed to them. So far as I can see at present, his conduct is most contemptible and outrageous."

There was a touch of sarcasm in her voice. I saw it would not do to make excuses for Con with her. I added:

"I fear I may have grown callous about such things, but I can assure you it is not because of my sympathy for them, but merely from the frequency of their occurrence. If there were more women in the world with your force of character and strength of mind, there would be fewer such exhibitions as we saw this evening."

"Thanks for the compliment," she said, but there was a sort of carelessness in her manner which seemed to indicate that she placed but little reliance on my assertions.

I left her at her door, after wishing her a pleasant visit to Baltimore, and promising to see her on her return.

Alice liked me somewhat, I was convinced, but I saw that, with her, I must avoid exposing that side of my life which others would have found excuses for—nay, some even admiration.

No spring would have been considered complete without a Lenten party to the shore, and some two or three weeks later the one we had organized was gotten under way. There were about a dozen in all, and a merrier party was seldom seen.

We were chaperoned by Mr. and Mrs. Fluttermore, and they were extremely liberal in their views as to the latitude to be allowed to young people—for they were young themselves. She could not have been over twenty years old, and he was about twenty-five.

She was a jolly, round-faced little woman, almost incurring the imputation of *embonpoint*. Before her marriage she was remarked at times as being rather gay, though it was, I fancy, only the natural jollity of her disposition which led her to do things a trifle out of the usual course.

Ralph Fluttermore, her worse half, had been one of the boys before he married, and even now was noted as a married flirt. He was a dark, black-haired man, of medium stature, with a careful pronunciation and faultless dress.

These two, as can be imagined, made what we called "excellent chaperons."

We had chartered a special car, and there was, of course, ample room for us all. Ann Houghton and myself sat together. In the seat directly behind us were Foster Perkins and Helen Vincent. She was what might be called a dashing blonde. She was possessed of a shapely form, a round, jolly face, a shock of auburn hair, and a pair of blue eyes which beamed like summer skies. And then, her *laugh!* It was not like the inane murmur of many of her

sex; but hearty and honest. She told funny stories as well as a man could, and was always wanted on parties of this kind.

In the seat before us sat Jack Isaacs and Lou Stephens —a tall, black-eyed society girl, with the bloom of full health in her cheeks. She was the kind of a girl who could wear a large hat and a red jersey in summer and not seem overweighted.

Ann and I talked together quietly for some time. I was very fond of her; there was no doubt of that. It was not her beauty, for, judged by a strict standard, she was possessed of but a limited supply. Neither can I say she was intelligent in any way out of the ordinary. Perhaps her charm lay in her manner and little ways. She was a charming girl. Besides, in my case there was another cause for my love for her, and that was her deep affection for me.

You sometimes hear it said that a man's affection wanes as soon as he succeeds in winning a girl's heart. There is much truth in it; but it takes him quite a little while to tire in some cases. There is a flattery in a woman's true affection which, while it is new, few men are proof against, no matter how selfish and heartless they may be ordinarily.

Foster and Miss Vincent seemed to be enjoying themselves also, though she seemed rather quieter than usual to-day. This may have prompted Foster to say:

"Do you know, Miss Nellie, that you remind me very much, just now, of apple-blossoms on ice?"

Jack Isaacs was reading to Miss Stephens a poem which he had written, all of which I was not able to catch, but it seemed to be some abominable doggerel about a lovely girl, and every stanza ended with—"And she gave every lover the mitten."

"Doesn't this put you in mind of summer vacations and flirtations?" I asked, turning to our neighbors in the seat behind.

"Indeed it does," Miss Vincent answered; "of the breezy mountains, with their hardly-won refuges for pedestrians, and their solitary rocks, just large enough as a seat for two, or long stretches of white sand bathed in moonlight——"

"Why, Miss Nellie, I did not know you were so poetical," broke in Foster.

"You will charm Foster so that he will pay you his greatest compliment and tell you that you remind him of a large yellow pelican, 'chassezing' through ether," I said.

"Summer is a pleasant time, surely," Ann said, as I turned to her again, "but it always comes to an end too soon.

I could see she was thinking of our little affair of the past summer, poor little girl.

"Young ladies mourn over things more than men, don't they?" I queried. "I presume it is because the work which they do, if they do any, is of such a character as allows them, even in the midst of it, to sorrow over the past. Don't *you* think so?" I asked, as I saw Miss Stephens turn toward us.

She bent her glorious eyes on me and gave a little moue, while her eyes seemed to smile.

"No," she laughed; and then asked, "What was it?"

I repeated my question.

"Men," she said, after a moment's consideration, "are nasty, selfish things, and want to have the right to be wicked themselves, and not let us girls have any jolly times *at all—at least* our mothers won't. Girls mourn longer

than men do because they are good and honest; men do not mourn long because they are selfish and heartless."

"I'll tell you my explanation," said Foster, who was leaning over the back of our seat and had caught the tenour of the conversation. "The men are naturally so unattractive that it takes girls a long time to become attached to them, and when they leave them they have to retrace their steps and go all over the process again. Now, as to women, there are so many lovely ones that it makes a man feel like emigrating to Utah so he can have several wives."

"Now, Foster," said his companion, "you are getting quite improper. You are wading beyond your depth; your remarks are neither moral nor logical."

These discussions on social life were brought to a close for the time by Ann producing a box of candy, of which we all partook. When this diversion was concluded, each of us drifted back into conversation with his partner.

I was talking to Ann of old times, and of course we again touched on the previous summer as a topic. She intimated that I had forgotten the pleasant times we had had.

"I hope you don't really think that," I said, so low that no one overheard us.

"All men forget, even according to your own account," she said.

"Then I am not a man in this regard," I answered. Her little hand was lying by her side, and, somehow, my own fell over it softly in a way which no one else could possibly notice. "Some time I shall tell you why I have not forgotten."

As we neared the shore, I went to the end of the car for a drink of water, and while I was absent Tom Dickson slipped into my seat for a moment, leaving his own by Miss Warren vacant, and I sat down beside her.

She was a Western girl, and had only lately come to live in our city.

She was a very beautiful woman. Her figure, in height and mould, was almost perfect, and one was never tired of feasting his eyes on her charms. Her rather pale face was lit by languorous black eyes, and her hair was of that glossy black which is said to resemble the raven's wing. She was dignified and easy in her movements, and while not staid in her manners, was a girl of great self-possession. She wore a dress of dark-brown color, and a half-dozen beautiful white roses were pinned on her bosom.

"This, I presume, is your first trip to this shore," I said; "I hope you will enjoy it."

"I know I shall," she answered, smiling. "I always enjoy the ocean. I could sit forever and watch its breakers dash on the shore. Still, I think it has oftentimes a saddening influence on one's feelings."

"That is the rule with most pleasures," I answered. "But sometimes I think it makes them more enjoyable by contrast. I have made it a principle in my brief life to get rid of care and trouble at once, by putting them behind me."

"You are, then, one of two things," she said, smiling, "a philosopher or a selfish man."

"You evidently do not consider the terms synonymous," I replied.

"Liberally interpreted, no," she answered. "That philosophy which teaches us to live a God-fearing life, and which tells that ills must come and must be met with fortitude, is desirable; but that process of reasoning which tramples on the best feelings of the heart, and those from which the purest lessons can be learned, is what I call unadulterated selfishness."

"Well, you may be right," I answered. "I do not know how it is, but to-day I have talked more philosophy than small talk, a rare thing in society."

From this we drifted into other topics, and we arrived at our destination before I left her.

That evening we had a dinner-party, over which we were very merry.

The next day was Sunday, and the various members of the party paired off. Most of them drove or walked on the beach.

In the morning Ann and I went up the lighthouse for a view of the ocean and the city. It was not the hour for visitors when we arrived, but a *douceur* made the keeper relax a trifle in our favor.

It was a long and arduous climb, like the way into the spider's parlor, but after stopping many times for breath we at last reached the summit.

Here, of course, Ann was afraid to walk around the balcony without my assistance, and she clung tightly to my arm with both her hands.

From where we stood there was quite a pretty view. Landward lay the town, which looked very circumscribed; beyond it the waste of marshes, and then the mainland. Seaward was the more interesting view. It was a charming day, with an atmosphere like May rather than March. The ocean was quite calm, and lay glittering in the sunlight as if asleep. There were two cat-boats putting out of the inlet, and the people on board looked like pygmies from our elevated station. There was scarcely enough breeze to enable the boats to come about, and their sails flapped lazily every now and then.

There were several schooners in the offing, and far out a large steamer with a long trail of black smoke after her.

The danger of Ann's falling over very naturally continued, even when we were standing still, and she still retained my arm.

I felt, somehow, as though it was not strictly honest for me to make love to this girl, for while, of course, I was fond of her, yet it was not in a way which made me desire an engagement of marriage. My last experience in that way was a warning to me, and I enjoyed life too much, as I was, to wish to be fettered. But many a man who has said this to himself has proposed a few minutes afterward. I had, in truth, gone so far with Ann that she considered me as her property, I believe, though during the winter past I had made endeavors to prevent my attentions being too marked.

I really could not now have prevented what happened. She looked so sweet and seemed to repose so much confidence in me that I bent my head and kissed her full upon her lips.

"Dick," she said, drawing back, "I don't think that is right."

"Why?" I asked, clasping her hands in mine and laughing.

"Because," she replied, "what am I to you, or you to me, to warrant such a salute?"

"I do not know what I am to you," I said, "but I know what you are to me."

"What?" she asked.

"The best and dearest little girl in all this world," I answered, as I stooped down and repeated my salute.

And then (I don't know why I committed myself so far) I promised her a great many things which I knew, even then, that I should never perform. It is needless to detail the scene. I felt that it was a mistake. I found that I

must protect myself, for the time, in some way, and therefore I insisted that there should be no announcement of our engagement for at least six months, not even to her dearest friend. I told her I should need all that time to perfect my plans. This was strictly true, but I feared even six months would not be sufficient.

Ann was, of course, opposed to this, but I succeeded, at last, in getting her to promise not to hint at anything till six months were passed, and she was one of the few girls I knew who would keep such a promise.

At lunch Jack Isaacs asked Ann to drive with him that afternoon, but she had an engagement with me for that very pleasure.

"Look here, Dick," said Tom, "you are monopolizing Miss Houghton, I think."

"Only for this afternoon," I answered, looking at the subject of his remark and smiling.

It does not necessarily follow that men who lead lives of pleasure of a dissolute kind lose their appreciation of the finer side of life. I have tried almost every walk of enjoyment, and indulged in the coarser as well as the more refined pleasures, and yet I now remember that afternoon drive which I took with Ann Houghton as well almost as though it had been yesterday. That man must be indeed low who does not feel influenced to pure thoughts when by the side of an innocent girl who loves him.

We drove far up the beach. The sun sank in a halo of crimson clouds and the sea looked purple in the glow. A flock of little sandpipers flew ahead of us uttering their shrill cries, but these were the only living things that appeared, outside of ourselves. Every now and then our wheels would be lapped by the waves, and the horses would splash through them until the breaker receded.

We talked long and earnestly during that ride, but it did not contain much that would interest you deeply. The tenour of it may be guessed at when I tell you that I found I could drive exceedingly well with one hand.

Someone started the topic of flirtation at the dinner-table that evening. I was sitting with Frances Warren, and Ann was opposite with Jack Isaacs.

"Flirting," said Bertie Marsden, "is necessary for the welfare of society, and no one should complain because now and then a foolish insect has its wings singed by the fire."

"That's what I think, too," broke in Belle Manly. "What if a bud is blighted now and then. It is a lesson for others. '*Sauve qui peut*' is my motto."

"It's well enough for you to say that, Miss Belle," said Con Creighton, "for you have a heart of stone and the wit of——"

"Jupiter," she suggested.

"Yes, some of those duffers. But how when it is some little tender-hearted creature?"

"I am astonished to see you display so much feeling," Belle laughed. This was a cut at Con's breaking of his engagement.

She was looking very well to-night. True, there was nothing striking about her. Her figure was somewhat over-stout and her features were irregular. Her mouth was small and determined-looking and her eyes scintillating. She was, however, very rich, and, though eccentric, was an interesting girl to talk to, and had written a popular novel.

"I tell you what I think," I said, after each had expressed his or her opinion on the subject. "If two people meet on equal terms, then it is fair sport and neither has a right to blame the other; but for an old and experienced

hand to enter the lists with a novice in the art is as much murder as when a cool-headed, ice-hearted Parisian swordsman calls out a country boy and runs him through the heart for sport. People do not know how many tragedies are being enacted amid the seeming common-places of life. There are more broken hearts about than we wot of."

This sally of mine was greeted with laughter by most of the party. It was so unlike me, they said. As a matter of fact the men were not able to understand the simile; I fancy it was too deep for them.

But Ann looked over and smiled approvingly.

Monday evening we had a german, and on Tuesday we returned home.

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNPLEASANT FIX.

"Now, I do wish that this engagement would come off."

MARRIAGE they say, is like a beleaguered city, because all who are out want to get in, while all who are in want to get out. It is much the same with engagements to marry, I think, for when I found myself in the position of having definitely promised to marry Ann Houghton, I wondered how I had ever been thoughtless enough to commit myself so far, and I planned how I might escape from the toils with ease and dignity.

Was there ever a man who, the day after his acceptance by the girl he thought he loved, did not find doubts coming over his brain? I believe not. The day before, he knows no peace of mind for longing that she will accept his love; doubts are swallowed up in the excitement of the pursuit. The day following, in the chilliness of the morning watch, he questions with his own heart whether it was not a mistake. The fact that she has accepted him is

the cause of his doubting. We never want anything so much as that which we have difficulty in procuring. When we get it we doubt if it is of much value after all.

The intimacy allowed by my position as Ann's betrothed was, of course, most agreeable; still, she cared so much for me that her love in a little time began to cloy somewhat. When a month passed by, and I thought that one-sixth of the period of silence as to our engagement had passed, it began to worry me. I wished I could be free and untrammelled again.

I saw several ways in which my end might be accomplished. I could, for instance, get up an attachment for some actress, like Con Creighton, and Ann would be compelled to sever her relations with me because of society's gossip. This was not a method, however, which commended itself to me. It was only fitted for extreme cases.

Then I thought I would wait until the end of the probationary six months, and tell Ann I was ruined at play, or that my father would not give me any allowance to start married life with. But I felt these would be ineffectual. Ann was too loving and faithful to be daunted by such things as these, even had I been able to induce her to believe in them, which was a matter of doubt.

I concluded that the old-fashioned way was best: A little neglect, now and then, gradually increasing, lessening of visits, unexplained coolness when asked why, accusations of want of love from her, gradually culminating in the climax of return of presents and a formal dissolution of bonds.

As the play bills have it: "Act I. Engaged. Act II. Drifting Apart. Act III. The Separation."

The little play is soon over, the litter is cleared off, the stage set for a fresh scene, and another act goes on.

When I bethought me that I should have all the summer-time in which to complete my plan of action, there was no immediate hurry. There is no season like summer for making and breaking engagements.

Of what use was it to take trouble on interest. When in doubt on such matters it is wiser to do nothing, but to wait for something to turn up.

Indeed, I enjoyed Ann's society very much, and I sometimes look back, as I have said, with much pleasure at our association.

During the early part of the summer Ann stayed at one of the pretty hotels within easy reach of the city. I took rooms there myself for a time. This enabled me to see as much of her as I wished, yet in the freedom of hotel life did not excite the remark which would have followed my constant visits, had I lived elsewhere.

Jack Isaacs also was staying at the house. He was generally found in attendance. As he did not know of our position, I suppose he considered his chances were not yet all dead. He was poor, and her father was well off; he had much to gain in marrying her.

She would make much fun of him sometimes. Jack, as I think I told you, was a pursy little fellow with a large blonde mustache and rather pleasant manners, but he was not what one would call a dignified man either in looks or behavior. He had a reputation of making up to every rich girl who came out, and Ann treated him with marked indifference at times.

But Jack took all her jesting with good nature, and, as he was always about, he sometimes managed to be present when he was wanted as well as when he was not. There is something admirable in a man who has the equanimity to bear in good part the buffets of society for the sake of the

crumbs he may catch from the tables. But it pays well, sometimes. I have seen men raise themselves to social heights by this patience in being kicked.

It did not seem to avail him much now, however. There could be no doubt about Ann's affection for me. Women have several times told me that a man cannot know when a woman really cares for him. I think they are wrong. He will be deceived at times, but seldom.

He must be a man of small discernment who cannot catch the gleam of love which may flash upon him straight from her soul. He is, indeed, a dullard if he does not truly discern her affection in the tremulous clasp of her hand, or in the touch of her lips.

Ann really deserved the love of a man who could continue faithful to her. I knew I was not that one.

She was bright and happy in her appearance, it is true, but she was not the tall, distinguished-looking woman whom I desired for my wife, if I married at all. Since my affair with Bonnie Lyman, I was determined I would marry only a personally handsome woman. Then, too, she was not brilliant in her conversation, and was not destined to shine to any great extent in society.

Nor was she wealthy enough to offset these defects. On investigation I had lately found out that all the money she was possessed of in her own right was very little, and that what there was of it was tied up in the tightest kind of a trust. Her father was reported very wealthy, but he was in good health, and close, and not the kind of a man who would lay out much money on Ann at present.

I made up my mind definitely that I must break our engagement, and as summer came on I again conjured up plans of escape.

It was now July, and in a short time we should pass the

meridian of our secret compact. Of late my behavior toward Ann had not been of a character to lead her to believe that I was growing colder. I found that staying at the same house with her, while it gave us time to be alone together without exciting observation, was not calculated to force us apart.

I deemed it best to form my plans so that we might be separated during the remaining summer months. Fortune favors those who look out for her gifts, they say, and it proved true in my case.

My father was quite an old friend of Mrs. Moore, Agnes' mother, and he informed me one day, soon after I had made up my mind that the separation scheme was most promising, that Mrs. Moore and Agnes were going to spend the summer at Nantucket, and he thought he would go with them. Father and Mrs. Moore were second-cousins.

He asked me if I was not desirous of going with them. As Agnes was to be one of the party, it may be surmised that I was only too happy. The plan suited me exactly. It was arranged that we should start about the middle of July, to be gone about two months. I knew that, if I returned to town at the end of that time, Ann would have left for Lake George, and that her absence would continue for several months.

This was my chance for a dissolution of bonds, without much recrimination or great unpleasantness.

Of course Ann was overwhelmed when one Sunday I told her of my trip. I explained that it was a summons from my father, who wanted me with him, and that I could not return for a month or two.

It was dusk, and we were sitting on a rustic bench out on the lawn of the hotel.

"Here I was counting on the pleasant times we were to have this summer, and now you are going away for over a month, and when you come back I shall have gone to Lake George," she said. She quite broke down, and sobbed quietly to herself.

What could I do but take her in my arms and kiss her tears away, and tell her that I should not forget her—that I would write to her every day, and a variety of other soothing sayings which lovers use for comfort?

Some poet has said that the saddest of all sights is a woman in tears. I dislike very much, myself, to see a woman cry. It always seems a sort of protest against the brutality of man. He is not much of a man if, under such circumstances, he does not feel a desire to take her in his arms and pacify her.

However that may be, when Ann returned to the house, clinging to my arm, she was smiling and chatting as only a pleased woman can.

It must not be imagined that I had cut myself off from all other enjoyments during my engagement with Ann.

Some time before I arranged the trip for the summer, there was a rather interesting contest between two society men, which was the talk of the town at the time, though it has since been almost forgotten.

The encounter arose in this way.

Charlie Walton, who was a hot-headed fellow, had overheard Ed Houghton say something derogatory to the character of Belle Manly, and while he was not a particular friend of hers, yet he was in a rather chivalric mood at the time, and called Ed a liar.

This was a fighting word, and the two sprang at each other. Con Creighton, who happened to be present at the time, interfered.

It was at the Philadelphia Club, and with the assistance of a mutual friend he soon dissuaded them from settling their differences there. They were deeply angry at each other, however, and nothing would satisfy Walton but a fight.

The question was submitted to mutual friends. It was agreed that an ordinary duel was not the thing. Con Creighton was the man who solved the difficult question of honor, by proposing that they fight in the cellar of his house, according to the Marquis of Queensberry's rules —the man who was defeated to apologize.

Con's family had left town for the summer, and there was no one at home save himself. He slept there, but took his meals at the club, and as there was no use for servants they had all been taken to the summer residence.

Walton was considered by many as possessing the finest figure as well as the handsomest face in the city. He was six feet high, with a well-set form, solid as a stone wall. He had an easy carriage and great reach of arm, and was an expert boxer. Though a heavy drinker, his magnificent physique enabled him to withstand the effect of much dissipation.

Ed Houghton was known as one of the champion dudes of the city, and was celebrated as a swell. His clothes were something extraordinary, and the stories he told were gigantic in their colossal untruthfulness. The one thing he had a right to be proud of was his figure. He was certainly well built, graceful, and wiry—not so stout as to be clumsy, but full of muscle and sinew.

Out of all his boasting and bragging there was only one thing that he really did well—that was boxing. It is a mistake to think that a liar and a braggart is always a coward. It is often so, it is true, but there are exceptions. Ed was one.

The men were fairly matched, though the odds were slightly in favor of Walton.

As the contest promised to be one of great interest, invitations were at a great premium. Only a favored few were let into the secret of the time and place of the meeting, but many more heard the rumor that it was to take place at no distant day.

More than a score of fashionable men assembled on the night fixed for the fight. Among them were the leaders of society and noted club men. It was what the newspaper reporter would have called a "representative gathering."

The cellar of Con's house was large, and a ring had been formed, so that the fight might be conducted scientifically. Con was referee, I was Ed Houghton's second, and Bertie Marsden was Charlie's best man.

I should be glad to give you a detailed account of this affair of honor, but perhaps it would not be well to perpetuate it in this form. The sporting papers got hold of the encounter, and a week or two afterward published a full account of it, though they did not give the full names of the participants. For information as to the detail of the affair, and the appearance of the men at the close of each round, I refer you to that source.

It is sufficient to say here that Ed, at first, seemed to have the best of the fight, but his wind did not hold out, and he was laid low in the fifth round, well used up.

Both men were badly punished, and the services of a countenance painter, whose place of business is up Fifth Street, were called into play a couple of days after, in order to make the participants in the quarrel presentable to the public. In the interim they stayed at Con's house.

They *were better* friends from that time on than ever

before, and the fellows generally liked Ed better, as he had shown real pluck and mettle.

Of all the men in that particular set, I think Con Creighton was the most reckless. A little incident which occurred a few days before my start for my summer trip will illustrate his disposition in this way.

A party of us had gone down town to a somewhat noted summer-garden, which in its arrangements reminded me of one of the *salles de dance* in Paris.

A large hall was furnished about the sides with tables where one could sit and drink, while in the middle of the floor a considerable space was devoted to dancing. A great number of girls, of various degrees of comeliness, were sitting at the tables, drinking and laughing with their male companions. At one end of the hall there was a stage, and, while the dancers were resting, various performers came out, and catered to the desires of the crowd.

As I looked about, I was struck by the number of respectable-looking middle-aged men who were enjoying the hospitalities of the place. Of course, I had many times seen this class at such places before, but to-night they were unusually numerous. I recognized among them several merchants, a banker, and a number of lawyers—men of family, most of them—taking in the delights of the place. I recalled, then, the fact that it was well on into summer, and most of those able to afford it had sent their families off into the country or to the seaside, while they remained at home to take care of business. It was necessary that they, who bore the burden and heat of the day, should have some relaxation. To keep their minds from dwelling on the sorrows of separation they came here. This accounted for the large and respectable attendance. It was the best season for such places on this account.

Did you ever think what a disintegration of society there would be if all the women who are entitled to divorces from their husbands were to get them? The rule cannot be reversed. How many of our mothers suffer in silence for the sake of their children? I am hardened, but I could not help thinking thus as I looked about me.

Con Creighton, always in for a lark, said to Ed Houghton, some time after we entered and just after the retirement from the stage of a so-called ballad-singer:

"I'll bet you ten to one that I can get up there and sing a song better than that."

"Done," said Ed. "But who will be the judge of your proficiency?"

"I will leave it to the applause of the spectators," replied Con.

It was not very difficult to secure the consent of the stage-manager to Con's giving us a song. He thought a song, good or bad, by a dude, would afford fun for the crowd.

Con mounted the stage and sat down to the piano. There were cries of, "Shoot de dude!" "Rats!" "Oh, go die!" and any number of equally select expressions, but Con paid no attention.

He touched the piano with a professional air and sang, "Remember me, Love, in your Prayers," an old concert-hall favorite, which captured the audience at once.

The encores were so pronounced that he was compelled to respond several times.

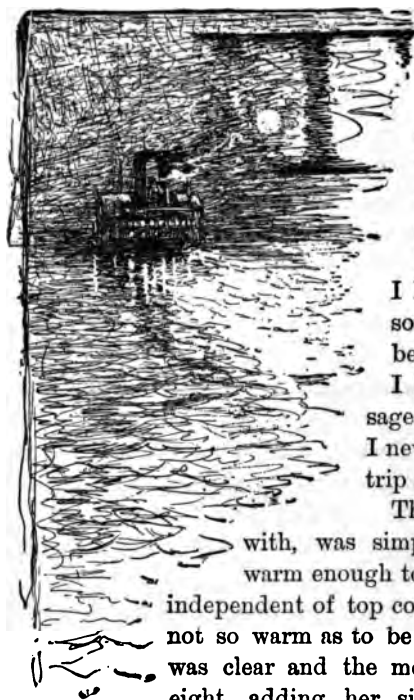
There could be no manner of doubt that he had fairly won his wager, and Ed was compelled to pay up.

I only recall these little occurrences as samples of the amusements we were fond of. Unfortunately all our affairs were not so innocent.

CHAPTER VII.

A TOUCH FROM THE PAST.

"Have entangling alliances with none."



THREE days later, one glorious summer evening, I was sitting on the deck of the steamer Pilgrim, which was cleaving the calm waters of Long Island Sound. I had travelled on the sound steamers a number of times before, and I have made the passage many times since, but I never recall as pleasant a trip as this particular one.

The weather, to begin with, was simply perfect. It was warm enough to make one feel quite independent of top coats or wraps, and yet not so warm as to be noticeable. The sky was clear and the moon rose at half-past eight, adding her silver to the dancing waves. Next to the atmosphere came the company pres-

a t, for on such a ride the weather is the first consideration. Mrs. Moore, Agnes, and her friend Belle Manly comprised the ladies; and father, Wistar Wells, and myself, the men. Miss Manly and Wells I have spoken of before. Belle was quite an addition to the party, for she was always bright and entertaining. Wistar Wells was a man who resembled a tame elephant. He was very tall and very large and wore a full, dark beard and heavy shock of hair. He dressed rather carelessly and was not in any way handsome. But two things he did really well —he swam like a fish and danced like a winged angel. He was at times very rude, and had he not been wealthy and unmarried he would not have been tolerated in that society in which he essayed to move. Marriageability and money will excuse much in a young man.

He was not a favorite with Agnes; his manners were too pronounced for her liking. She was quiet and dignified herself, and liked those qualities in others. While I have spoken to you of her appearance before, I fear I failed to give you any clear idea of her beauty. Nor do I think pen and ink could well describe her. Not that she was so remarkable—she was not absolutely brilliant—but because she had about her that delicate atmosphere of negative beauty which is extremely difficult to describe. She was tall and rather stately, and moved with dignity and grace. Her face was clear-cut in its outlines, and in its repose was cold; but it could light up wonderfully under the influence of her smile. Her skin was pure and fair to an extraordinary degree. I have sometimes thought she must be troubled with some affection of the heart, which is said to produce that ethereal effect.

Agnes was a thorough society girl, and was familiar with all its coquettish ways. Through her quietness there broke

little winning graces, which were doubly charming by contrast.

After dinner we secured seats on the upper deck, forward, where we were sheltered from the breeze, which now blew rather fresh, and yet were in a position where we could see ahead. Agnes and I were together, somewhat apart from the others, my father and Mrs. Moore and Wistar and Belle also pairing off.

The moonlight playing on the waves formed a pathway which reached far out into the waters of the great sound. This was a sight which always impressed me. Though I am a society man, yet I have endeavored to cultivate a love of Nature and her scenes; in fact, I believe I am born with a love for such things, for which I thank the gods.

Agnes also had a deep appreciation of the enjoyment of the moment. It was not the superficial, "How lovely!" of the average girl, but a true love for the beauty of the thing.

We sat silent for some time. Such scenes seem often to promote thought and silence. At last I said:

"What are you thinking of?"

"I am wondering where that beautiful pathway leads to," she said, indicating the long line of glittering light over the waves.

I recalled to mind a very pretty poem I had once read, in which the subject had been discussed.

"Maybe it leads to the city of rest," I said, softly; "or to the beautiful golden palace, whose builder and maker is the God you love so well."

Agnes was a devout girl, and I never offended her by my infidel notions. I tried, indeed, while not acknowledging anything to her, to make her believe that I only needed sympathy to completely convert me.

"I like to hear you say that, Dick," she said. "It shows that you are a true believer despite all you sometimes say."

I did not answer her directly, but changed the idea, if not the subject, by saying, after a little silence:

"I love, more than all, to think that that pathway, stretching out there in its golden splendor, leads to the beautiful City of Love. It is like the pathway a man builds for himself in his mind's eye over the rolling sea of life. There are wastes to cross, but at the end he sees Love waiting and watching for him."

Agnes' shawl fell from her shoulders, after a little while, and, of course, I was compelled to put it on again, which operation was performed in a very careful and loving manner. Strangely enough, after the shawl was arranged perfectly, my arm still seemed to have an attraction for the back of the chair in which she sat, and it remained there. It really did no harm, as we were in a dark place where no one would notice it. If my arm did happen to fall over her shoulders once in a while, why, what mattered it? we were old friends.

What can be pleasanter, in an innocent way, than a steamer's deck on a moonlight night, with your arm about a beautiful girl, whose eyes look love upon you, and who talks to you in such a confidential way that you swear you have near you all that makes life worth living.

It was late at night when the ladies retired, and father and Wistar soon followed suit. I did not feel in the mood for sleeping, however, so I sat out and smoked and watched the waves roll and play in the moonlight. The look-out on the bow would report to the pilot now and then the positions of lights and vessels ahead, and then we would slip by some lazy schooner or ship which seemed like a phantom of the sea.

After a time, I strolled back along the outer deck to the stern of the vessel and stood and leaned over, looking out at the white foam which the paddle-wheels of the great steamer had beaten up. As far as the eye could reach the track on the waves could thus be traced.

I had stood there many times before and often thought what a desirable place it would be for a suicide. It was like standing on the brink of a high precipice—you felt, involuntarily, a desire to leap over. The ease with which it could be done maybe was the cause of the sensation.

That night the thought came over my mind again, what a nice place for a suicide! One plunge, then, in an instant almost, you would find yourself a mile astern, tossed in the midst of that white foam.

Even if you were seen to jump, those great engines could not be stopped until they had carried their heavy burden far away. No regrets would avail. No chance to turn back to life. Death for certain.

I was leaning close to one of the awning-posts, and was somewhat in a shadow, and not apt to be noticed by the casual observer.

As I stood there I saw a woman's figure moving quietly out to the farthermost stern.

I paid no attention at first, as there was nothing peculiar about her. True, she was alone, and it was late at night; but that was no extraordinary sight on a Sound steamer.

I had begun to muse, when by chance I turned my gaze again in the direction of the form.

The next instant I started rapidly toward her with an exclamation of surprise.

She had thrown back her cloak and was about to climb over the rail. One foot was placed among the ropes of the lattice-work railing, and she was preparing for a spring.

By the time I reached her she was in the act of leaping into the foam of the wake. Another instant and I should have been too late.

I threw both arms about her and lifted her bodily back on the deck.

She did not scream or cry out loudly.

"Why don't you let me alone?" she queried, in a harsh voice. "I know best what's good for me."

I did not recognize the tone, but somehow, as I held her in my arms, and her hair blew softly against my cheek in the night wind, I could almost have sworn that there was between us some bond or affinity.

Suddenly she turned violently in my arms and the moonlight fell full upon her face.

I released her and started back, with an exclamation of horror and amazement. At that instant a flood of memories crossed my mind. The chief figure in them was a pretty girl in a comic-opera chorus who could not withstand the temptations and allurements of the gay side of life—late suppers and jolly companions.

"Polly," I cried, "what does this mean?" She was the girl I spoke of as being at McGettigan's.

"Why, the end, if you'd only let me alone," she said, sharply. Then she came closer and peered into my face. "Why, Dick," she said, "is it you?"

God help her! I could distinguish the fumes of liquor about her, and, even in the moonlight, I could see that her face showed traces of excess in many ways.

Yet she was still good-looking. Her figure was lithe and supple, as of old, and her hair, long and raven, played over her shoulders in silken waves.

Persons who are interrupted on the brink of suicide seldom care to go on with it after a moment has passed.

They appear to commit the act in their mind, as it were, and are satisfied with that. Polly was so, at least, and seemed to have no intention of ending her career now.

I stood on the deck and talked for some time with her, and tried to induce her to turn away from drink and get into some woman's home. When we parted I gave her ten dollars.

She had no state-room, but I saw that she was taken care of by the stewardess, to whom I gave a dollar, with the caution to look out for Polly, as I feared she might throw herself overboard.

I did not see her when we left next morning, and I have never heard of her since. She was but one of many who drift into obscurity and death below the surface in the great under-world.

After seeing that Polly was taken care of, I walked the deck and smoked another cigar. I had many things to muse over. What a sad life was that of this girl. Pretty, courted, fêted—life a smile and a thing of joy and gladness, then—what I had seen to-night.

I soon turned from this to the more perplexing one of my engagement to Ann, and how to dissolve it; of my love, too, for Agnes.

But I have cultivated the habit, among other things, of putting care and trouble behind me, for the time, at least; and as I tossed the stump of my cigar away at one o'clock that night, I used it as a weight to carry overboard all those ideas which otherwise might have combined to keep me awake. I turned into my state-room, and in five minutes was sleeping as quietly as a child.

We were all up betimes next morning, took the train for New Bedford, and there embarked on the steamer for Nantucket.

After passing Wood's Holl the steamer's head was soon pointed, as it seemed, directly out to sea, though, in truth, we were still in the bay. Just as we lost sight of land astern we caught sight of it ahead.

Soon the cottages on the cliff appeared, then the light-house on Brant Point, and finally the town proper. The steamer skirted a long, low bluff, at whose base the sea played on the sandy beach. Then, in a twinkling, as it were, she passed around a corner of the island, and the town lay before us, seated on a graceful slope and reaching to the water's edge. But a little farther on and we passed the point of the bay, and gliding across the beautiful harbor the steamer soon lay moored to the wharf.

CHAPTER VIII.

NANTUCKET DAYS.

"Between two girls, who hath the merriest eye?"

NANTUCKET was rather an odd place for a society man like myself to visit for any prolonged stay. Bar Harbor or Newport would have been more in the line of my views, as a general thing; but under the circumstances I found my sojourn on the quaint little island by no means unpleasant.

We had very comfortable quarters in a little house on the cliff, overlooking the bay, somewhat out of the town; and the daily intercourse with Agnes was a source of interest to me which was not readily exhausted. Then, too, there was somewhat of entertainment in the natives and their manners and customs. The ringing of the Angelus at morn and eve, and the voice of

the town-crier heard in the land, were novel and interesting. I was told by the regular summer visitors that if you once went to Nantucket you would be certain to feel a longing to return there. I confess to a feeling of liking for the place somewhat different in its character from that which ordinarily affects me. Besides its quaintness there was the ordinary round of watering-place amusements, and quite a number of pleasant people outside of our own party who could enjoy them.

Had it not been for Agnes, I believe I should have fallen deeply in love with one of our summer friends. Indeed, as it was, I was brought considerably under her influence. She was a girl from one of the larger New England towns, but had none of that would-be ladylikeness about her which is so often characteristic of those of her sex who may come from such districts. She was an intelligent and refined woman by nature.

Her form was not tall, but with a tendency to stoutness. Her face was full, and of irregular features. A mobile mouth, and clear, blue eyes, which seemed to contain a look of latent inquiry, were its distinguishing features. Her almost golden hair was worn up over her forehead, in a little wave, as it were. She was not what you could call a beautiful girl, for she had few of the characteristics of positive beauty ; but there was a fascination in her little ways and jolly sayings which won the hearts of most men —and I was among their number. We had some enjoyable times together—particularly when Agnes was not by to divert my attention.

We met at a beach-party down on the south shore of the island, one moonlight night. These parties were one of the principal sources of amusement. They were simply picnics on the beach at night. Kitty and I were mutually

attracted at once, and even in the space of that evening we grew to be dear friends.

We strolled on the beach arm-in-arm, and I talked to her the extravagant sentiments due to the occasion. I introduced my favorite simile, I suppose, of the golden pathway which the moon built over the waters being the pathway to the City of Love, and so on.

Miss Kitty Archer was by no means unused to admiration, it seemed, for she absorbed flattery and love in a way quite innocent, but which you soon found was neither the ignorance nor the simpering love-sickness of the ordinary girl from the country-town. She could quiz you and laugh at you in a quiet way which was both fascinating and maddening, and the clasp of her little sunburnt hand had something so true and honest about it that one would have been happy in holding it forever. She was an impulsive child, though; and yet knew well how to take care of herself.

As the days went on I grew more deeply interested in her, and I think I may say that she was largely under my influence. I recall one day not long before I left the island, when we had a clam-bake at Tuckernuck, a small island at the western end of Nantucket, and a favorite place for such gatherings.

We had an exceedingly delightful party, and, of course, Agnes and Kitty were of the number. While the arrangements were completing for the feast, Kitty and I strolled off for a walk down one of the pathways through the scrubby wood which in part covered the island. A rock obstructed our way at one point, and in assisting Kitty over it I found it necessary to take her hand; you may be sure I did not let it go free when the difficulty was surmounted, and we strolled on, hand-in-hand, like two schoolchildren.

" Answer me truly," she said.

I recall that I at last said, "Kitty" (of course, it was "Kitty" now), "will you be sorry when I am gone away?"

"I shall die, I know," she answered.

There was really so much earnestness under the half-bantering tone in which she spoke, that it seemed as though her highly colored statement might contain some truth.

"And you, sonny?" she queried. She often called me so now, and it was a most fascinating title, coming from her lips. "And how will it be with you?" she continued. "Will you ever think of me when you get back into the whirl of society? Will not the girl from the country-town be forgotten in the glare of the ball-room?"

We had come to a fence. Beyond it was a sort of marsh or meadow, and then the ocean. The scene was rather sombre, somehow. The day was darkening and the wind blew fresh from the ocean on our faces. The surf moaned in a melancholy sort of way, which seemed to forebode a storm.

As Kitty uttered her question she placed her arms on the top rail of the fence, leaned her head on them, turned inquiringly on one side, and looked searchingly at me.

"Answer me truly," she said.

She was undoubtedly fascinating in the extreme in that position, which so suited her that she seemed almost beautiful.

"You misjudge me, Kitty," I answered, quietly. "You think I am one of those society men who make it a business to go about trying to get girls interested in them only for the purpose of play. But I am not that kind of a man. I shall not soon forget you—not half as soon as you will forget me. I want you, though, to give me something I can keep near me to remember you by until we meet again. Give me the best of all things, a lock of your hair."

"Well, that is a very foolish request," she said.

"But you are going to grant it for all that, are you not?" I queried, looking earnestly in her eyes.

Accidentally I had with me a pair of pocket-scissors, and then and there I cut a lock of hair from a curl which strayed from beneath her cap.

"I shall look at this often," I said, as I stowed the lock away in my pocket-book; "and when I am far away from you it will bring back the truest girl I ever knew."

She looked so demure, standing there, that I could not resist the temptation to put my arm around her. She let it remain so for one moment, and then, as I was about to kiss her, with a sudden whirl she released herself, just in season to avoid the cousinly salute.

"That will do, sonny," she said, in a semi-serious way. "What would the girl you are engaged to say of your conduct?" she added, suddenly.

I saw it was only a random shot, and knew she could not be acquainted with any facts.

"I do not know such a one," I said, laughing.

We started back together for the purpose of joining the others of our party. Just before we reached them, while we were walking through the wood in single file, I being in front, I felt Kitty take my left hand in both of hers and raise it to her lips and kiss it.

I clasped one of her own hands in mine and drew her beside me.

"Why, Kitty!" I said.

"It was my good-by," she replied. "I shall never see you again, just the same."

I saw there were tears in her eyes. Can you blame me that I kissed her several times, and murmured words of devotion to her?

She did not seriously object at first, but in a moment she put my embrace aside, as she said: "Come, you do not mean what you say; though, God pity me, I love you."

In a short time we had joined our party. Kitty was very silent during the walk back.

Toward evening we started on our return. We found that the captain of the boat had taken her around to the harbor through what was designated as "The Opening."

This was the narrow passage between the two islands, and when the tide was at half ebb or flow it rushed through the place like a mill-race. At this time it was always dangerous, but it was doubly so in case the surf on the sea-shore was running high, as it was that day.

We were all soon on board. The wind was east and therefore dead ahead for boats going out, while the tide was also running furiously with the wind.

To the westward, over the bar, out to sea, the breakers were dashing high, and the unbroken white line of surf clearly showed how impossible it would have been to cross the bar in safety.

Amid the laughter and joking of our party the boat was loosed from her moorings and, close-hauled, drew slowly out into the main channel. The narrowness of the passage only allowed short tacks. Someone struck up a song, with the accompaniment of a banjo which one of the boys had brought along. It was the old college ditty, having for its chorus—

"The ocean's waves may roll,
And the stormy winds may blow,
While we poor sailors go skipping to the tops,
And the landlubber lies down below."

Suddenly the song died out, and an ominous silence came over the boat. It seemed that, at almost the same mo-

ment, each member of the party had discovered that the boat was not making any progress toward the bay, but was gradually growing nearer to the angry line of breakers.

Wistar Wells attempted to make some joke, but only one or two smiled at it, and their mirth exhibited itself in one of the most saddening of all things—a smile forced from the soul tortured by fears. There is to me always something alarming in the wrinkling of a face in a ghastly grin, the mere attempt at a smile.

The white line of surf seemed growing nearer and nearer. If we reached it, it was certain destruction—no boat could live there. No man could stem the force of the tide-rips and reach the shore. I looked about upon our party. There were many blanched faces among them.

Dr. Brandy was actually murmuring a prayer to himself—a thing I fear he had not done for many years. My father was very calm, but as white as a ghost, while all the other men were quiet in the extreme. Belle Manly had her hand clasped on Wistar Wells' arm in a vice-like grip, while Bessie Willing, a pretty blonde girl from Boston, was hiding her face in her hands. She was somewhat protected from fears, however, I fancy, by Charley Manton, a New York boy, who took advantage of everybody's absent-mindedness to put his arm about her. Kitty Archer was least affected of all, to judge from her expression, for she looked neither pale nor agitated. Maybe she was interested in Agnes Moore and myself. Agnes was by my side. She was too much of a woman not to be frightened, and yet I believe she was so good and true a girl that had she been sure her last hour had come she would have been just as calm as she was amid this danger. Her face was like that of an angel. I laid one of my hands over her own, which were clasped in her lap, but I said nothing.

"Dick," she said, after a time, "is there much danger?"

"Oh, no, we shall come out all right," I answered. "There will be a fresh breeze in a little while which will take us along in spite of the tide."

My prediction did not come true just then, however.

Some time passed, and we were very slowly drifting toward the breakers. Now and then a little puff of wind would come and carry us somewhat ahead, but on the next tack the ground gained would be lost.

"Captain," I said, "do you not think we could help you with the sweeps?" These were the two long oars which we carried, used to row the boat in calm weather. Everyone, including the captain, had in the excitement forgotten these, I believe, for my proposition was hailed with enthusiasm.

The sweeps were placed in position, and with two men at each we managed to hold our position, and I think even made some headway. After a quarter of an hour's work a brisk breeze sprang up, and in a little while we were out of the rips and on our way home across the quiet bay.

It seemed, somehow, as though Agnes and I had come nearer together in heart in that short time when death stared us in the face. She was more tender and womanly in her manner toward me after that incident. She was a pure, beautiful girl—perhaps her defect was coldness. Purity of soul sometimes seems to go hand-in-hand with coldness and stateliness in woman's character. The lack of this is often what renders a woman attractive to average men. The freedom and jollity of the woman who is frank and reckless are sometimes refreshing after an interview with a marble statue. So you will see a vivacious girl with a pug nose, indifferent features, and defective complexion, marry a handsome man who has been society's pet. It is a prize,

indeed, when you find beauty, purity of soul, and warmth of feeling combined.

Agnes was one of the few girls who possessed them, and the longer I knew her the more thoroughly lovable she was and the more infatuated I became. Truly, I was very much interested in her, and if at times thoughts of my entanglement with Ann Houghton crossed my mind, I brushed them aside—"I am diplomatic enough to dissolve that compact when the proper time comes," I said to myself. I cannot say I gave myself much trouble about the means to be employed. The enjoyment of the passing moment was sufficient for me. I hoped fortune might favor me in some way, so as to render any unpleasant scene unnecessary.

One evening, some few days after the adventure I have mentioned, I received two letters.

One I saw was from Ann Houghton, while the other was post-marked "Newport," but I did not recognize the handwriting in which it was addressed.

As became a dutiful *fiancé*, I opened the former first. Ann wrote a great, sprawling sort of a hand, and took a page for every four lines, and then crossed and recrossed her pages until it was sometimes a regular Chinese puzzle to unravel the plot of her effusions. As far as I could gather from this one, however, she was still full of her great affection for me, and, judging from her letter, it was going to be a deucedly unpleasant job to get free from my entanglement with her.

I turned from her letter to that post-marked "Newport."

It was from Roland Randall. "Dear Dick," it ran, "come down and spend a couple of weeks with us here. You will find it more exciting than where you are, I fancy." *(May be not!)* "We have any amount of room, and shall

be awfully glad to have you. As an extra inducement, let me say that Miss Alice Carlton is staying here with her New York friends, the Van Wassons, whose cottage is next door to ours. You will have a free field—I won't say no favor—for Tom Dickson, who was here, has returned home, and while, of course, Alice has lots of attention, yet you know she is not the girl to desert old friends."

Then followed a passage in regard to the other attractions of the place, as viewed from the stand-point of a fast young man. He assured me that there was no lack of sport of the various kinds we sought after during winter months, but which was not less welcome in summer.

I determined to accept this invitation. It was a trial, it is true, to tear myself away from Kitty and Agnes, but the latter I could meet on her return at Newport, and this would be in a week or two. Kitty, of course, must be left some time; and though I knew it would be a blow to her, yet it could not be avoided.

That night I told my father and the members of our party of my proposed visit, and arranged to meet them as they returned home *via* Newport. Agnes did not say much when I mentioned my intended departure, but she was rather quiet during the remainder of the evening and next day.

On the following evening we went to call on some friends on the cliff, and after a time Agnes and I strolled out back and sat in the pavilion overlooking the water. The moon was nearly full, and the outlines of the bay stood out in plain relief from the silver of the water. Below us was Brant Point, with its lights gleaming from cottage windows; eastward lay the broad bay, where the great jetty crept over the waters like the much-reported sea-serpent. The lights on the little row-boats which

danced over the waves of the harbor looked like will-o'-the-wisps. There were a number of sail-boats out also, and as they tacked across the silver path of the moon their sails would change from dark to silvery white. Miles and miles away, across the island, the flash-light on Sankoty Head came to us at intervals of a minute.

Agnes appreciated the scene. She was not a deep girl; yet she was full enough of sentiment not to spoil a scene of beauty by the ordinary expressions of womankind, such as, "My! isn't that gorgeous?" or, "Gracious! isn't that splendid?" or, "My, that's awful pretty!"

After some talk, I mentioned how sorry I was to leave for Newport, and in the course of my argument to prove the fact I took up one of her slender, delicate hands, which was lying in her lap, and caressed it.

She drew it away, however, and in her quiet and dignified manner refused to allow me to regain possession of it. I compensated myself by putting my arm over the back of the bench on which we were sitting, where it had the appearance of being clasped about her, even if it was not actually so.

"I tell you I am deeply and truly sorry I must go so soon," I said.

"Is that true?" she queried. "I am fearful you are tired of us already."

She looked at me inquiringly, as if to read in my countenance the truth, which she doubted was not in my speech.

"If I had not definitely promised Roland Randall, I would not go," I replied, and I looked her fearlessly and unflinchingly in the eyes.

We were sitting on the edge of a covered pavilion which prevented the rays of the moon from falling on her face, so

long as she leaned back. There was a railing on the side in front of us, and, as I spoke, Agnes bent forward and leaned her arms on the railing, while her face was raised upward. The moonlight fell full upon her. Gods! how beautiful she was! Her clear-cut features were chiselled as those of a divine goddess of old, while her pallid skin shone as pure and beautiful as an angel's. Her mouth, with its delicate outlines, seemed created for kisses. A lock of her hair, becoming loose, fell down over her shoulder and swayed in the light breeze until I felt it touch my cheek. The dainty appearance of dishevelment which it gave her was charming.

Somehow, I forgot about everyone else I had ever cared for, and it was certain that to know that this girl was my own was the only thing in life worth having. My arm, which lay over the back of her seat, in a moment was clasped about her, and I had taken one of her hands in mine again. Her head was bent back, and I kissed her full upon her beautiful mouth. I often think of that kiss.

Agnes was startled. She had never been kissed by a lover before. She half rose from her seat, my arm still about her, and then suddenly twisted herself away from my grasp.

"Dick, what do you mean?" she said, in a faltering tone. And then, dear little girl that she was, she sat down on the bench again and, leaning her head on her arms, began to cry.

I sat down beside her on the bench and tried to put my arm about her, but she shook it off as in anger.

I know not then all of the mad words of passion which I murmured.

"Agnes, my darling," I said, "I am a beast and a brute to treat you so, but I really could not help it. You are so beautiful and lovely I did not know what I was doing."

The very best plea, I think, with a girl whom you have kissed against her will, is to say that you could not help it. It is a delicate compliment which she cannot resist.

"I want to tell you, too, of my great love for you, Agnes," I continued. "Day after day it has been growing deeper and truer, and now—indeed, I could not help it, Agnes—forgive me, won't you?" and I again put my arm about her.

I could see that her weeping was ceasing. I cannot, of course, remember all I said. When you are in love and trying to comfort and make a pretty woman believe it, you will naturally say much that you cannot remember.

At last she raised her head slowly, and looked full in my face. A pearly tear-drop or so glistened on her cheeks. Her face was lit with happiness, and her sweet, honest eyes shone with affection.

"Oh! Dick!" she exclaimed, in a trembling voice instinct with love that cannot be put into cold words, and which the two unmeaning monosyllables do not even indicate.

Next moment her arms were about my neck, and her face was hidden on my bosom, while I kissed her soft hair.

It is certainly a mistake to say that a man can only love truly once in his life. I can say now, after much experience, that I loved Agnes at that time with a wealth of real affection such as is seldom found, though in truth I was the *fiancé* of Ann Houghton.

I have taken you largely into my confidence, and I think you will pardon me if I pass over the rest of that evening.

Agnes was now more than ever opposed to my leaving for Newport, and I was strongly desirous of staying and enjoying my privileges as a lover. But I was bound to take into consideration one fact. I could not allow Agnes

to announce our engagement as yet. I must arrange to free myself from my other entanglements.

I had accepted Roland's invitation, I told Agnes, and must keep it. Really, I wished time to think out a plan for a breach of my engagement with Ann Houghton.

Much against her will, I bound Agnes to promises of secrecy until we met again, and in two days I was off for Newport.

Kitty Archer came down to the wharf to see me off. Agnes was not there when she came up. She called me aside from the crowd for a moment, and we crossed over the pier and leaned on the railing by the dock.

"I shall never see you again," she said. "I hope you do not carry away a very bad opinion of me."

"I assure you I shall never forget you," I answered. "I shall always think of you as the most lovable girl I ever met." I took out a handsome scarf-pin from my cravat.

"Kitty," I said, "take this as a memory of me. I shall return next year to claim it; until that time keep a soft spot in your heart for me."

Poor little girl! She would have cried, had others not been near. I need not tell you how sorry I was that we were not alone together. Perhaps it was better so; our parting would have been more loving, but more sorrowful.

She took the pin and put it in her bosom.

"Why do I care for you?" she said.

"Because of my love for you," I answered.

She said nothing more, but pinned a water-lily in my coat, and we went back to the others.

I have never seen her since.

CHAPTER IX.

AT NEWPORT.

"Are these, then, our masters?"

NEWPORT is the most beautiful watering-place in the world. From a society point of view it is also one of the most exclusive. Social life is much divided by "sets" and "cliques." If you can get thoroughly introduced into one of the proper sets, however, you may be certain of having a good time—provided, of course, you can stand the expense.

The cliff and its matchless corners offer unlimited opportunities for flirtations; while a constant round of parties, with tennis as accompaniment, take place on the beautiful lawns that skirt the cliff. Then, too, the Casino, with its dances and games, the beautiful and fashionable drives, the coaching, and even at times the bathing, besides a host of other amusements of the summer season, insure the sojourner a pleasant time. 'Tis

here one finds the best of companions—the fairest women and the most jovial men.

You may be certain that, as the guest of the Randalls, who were in the blue-blooded set, and were the intimates of the Van Wassons, of New York, I was soon in the midst of all the fashionable gayeties of the place. I met many new faces, and some lovely women—rich as well as beautiful. Indeed, I managed to enjoy myself exceedingly. Among all the pronounced belles of the summer, however, I think my thoughts and heart went out to my friend of the winter, Alice Carlton.

She was a girl who was about as unspoiled as any woman I ever met, and shone amid summer amusements as brightly as amid those of the winter. She was an odd girl, too, in her ways; different from the rest of her sex.

She was always so much of a woman and bore herself with calm dignity, and yet she took as much interest in fun and frolic as a school-girl. It is seldom one meets a girl of this kind. You will find many who are full of vivacity and jollity, and some few elderly women who are dignified, but alas! how seldom do you find them combined in the person of a young girl, sentient of love, and full of the warmth of budding womanhood! I think I have also spoken of this in relation to Agnes, but there was this wide difference between these two: Agnes was only a girl of ordinary mental powers—she was no way deep; while Alice was a woman of naturally keen perceptions, which had been highly cultivated by reading and thought. To find such a woman able to discuss philosophy at one moment and at the next to hold her own in a game of tennis, while at the same time she talked nonsense over the net, was very enjoyable. She was a girl and a woman all in one. To win her honest af-

fections was truly a worthy task, and one which possessed many attractions for me.

The cottages of the Randalls and the Van Wassons adjoined each other, as I believe I mentioned before. There were large lawns attached to each, or, rather, there was one lawn, for the line which separated their possessions had never been designated by any landmarks. The families were on such terms of intimacy that they may be said to have used both lawn and houses in common.

Charlie Van Wasson, a short, stout, red-haired, full-faced, jolly fellow, was very much in love with Lottie Randall, Roland's sister. Lottie was a charming girl. Tall and dark, with the most beautiful large black eyes ever seen, hair glossy black and with a slight wave in it, she was an exceedingly striking-looking girl. She was possessed of a constitution which seemed able to endure any strain and a never-ceasing fund of good spirits. I had known her before her entry into society, and had seen her many times since, and I vow that after months of late hours and balls her cheeks, even in the glare of a cold morning sun—the most trying test of a girl's complexion—would look as fresh and rosy as before her entrance into the giddy whirl.

Roland Randall returned the interest which Charlie took in Lottie by his attachment for Miss Ethel Van Wasson, who was as stout and jolly as her brother. She possessed two characteristics not always found in conjunction—auburn hair and a perfectly pure complexion. She could tell a funny story with as much grace as a man, though sometimes they were not of the very choicest kind. Roland and she were decidedly *épris*, though most of the love-making between them was, so far as outsiders could see, made up of sharp speeches and rebuffs to each other.

I was, as can be seen, very fortunately situated. The

little affairs between my neighbors occupied them for the most part, and Alice was left largely to my care. There are few things, I think, more annoying in summer-time than to live with a family, the men of which are in love with the girl you fancy—particularly when she is staying in the same house or very near to it. As their guest they have many advantages of you. It was a matter of self-congratulation with me that I was not placed in this position in the present instance.

Alice, it is true, had hosts of admirers, but, as I was so near, I managed to absorb a large portion of her time myself. Morning, noon, and night found me at her side, and the more I saw of her the more deeply interested did I become.

There are but few women in this life who can thoroughly enter into a man's comprehension of things and yet not lose some of the softness and delicacy of character —those tender, careless graces—without which they lack that for which they are chiefly adorable. Alice was an exception.

There was one ground on which we found a mutual and intense sympathy—that was poetry. Though I was a society man in the true sense of that term, I had not deserted the polite arts, and was an occasional contributor to the newspapers of my native town. Alice, I found, was likewise. Together we often sat, in the shade of the trees, in the easy cane chairs found on the lawn, and talked over our love for the art. No more ideal spot can be imagined. Far away before us slumbered the ocean, while the sea-gulls cried over us and now and then swooped down as though t kiss us.

Sometimes I would lie by the hour in the grass at [redacted] feet, repeating to her scraps of verse, or talking [redacted]

as the humor might strike us. I had an excellent memory for verse, and could repeat many favorites of hers.

She truly enjoyed it, which is more than can be said for most of her sex, many of whom have an ear for the jingle of verse, but few depth of thought enough to distinguish good from bad.

I one day recited Owen Meredith's "Aux Italiens" to her. She pretended, at first, that she was not familiar with it, but I found when I had finished that it was an old friend of hers.

It was the cause, indirectly, of quite an argument between us, which may prove of interest.

"There are a good many hearts like that, I think," she said.

"Do you mean as to depth of love, or being mismated?" I asked.

"Mismated," she said, quietly, and then, after a pause, added: "I haven't any great belief in the depth of affection of the ordinary man of the present day, particularly society men."

"Do you believe him incapable of love, or is it because the objects of it are usually unworthy?" I queried again, laughing.

"Somewhat of both, if such an impertinent question deserves an answer," she replied. "Do you suppose," she continued, slowly and earnestly, "that a woman who values her self-respect and happiness would care to link her fate to one of our modern society men? What do they offer as an inducement? Is an ability to smoke innumerable cigarettes and to lead the german all that a woman may ask for as the virtues of her liege lord and master? Is she to be thankful when he, after pursuing the walks of pleasure in ways which are the subject of talk and oftentimes

scandal, offers her the remains of his love, demanding at the same time that she shall be pure and unsullied?"

"I fear you are judging the class by one or two unfavorable specimens," I interrupted. "I can easily point out many noble and honest fellows among our society men. Wickedness is, after all, largely a question of comparison. Some of us men are perhaps prone to accept the world as we find it, and gauge our lives by its rules, even though they are not always strict; but who does not do the same? I do not pretend to anything myself, but when I look about on those who pose as religious devotees, and contrast their devoutness at the altar with their life in the world, I see little but hypocrisy in it. Who among them will use all the will-power they may be gifted with that they may live after the strict rulings of the so-called divine law? If the religious rules chime in with those of the world, they can be counted on to follow them; but how when it is a matter approved by the world but condemned by religion? Why, they follow it on Sundays, but never try to think of it amid the hurry of the week."

"All that may be true," Alice said, "but I can see no excuse in it. Do you deny that the life of the average society man is infinitely worse than that of his sister? That he is welcomed with open arms by society after known offences for which his sister would be ostracized?"

"I will not deny anything," I answered; "but I call your attention to the fact that, ever since the world began, society has upheld a different standard of morality for men. This is a philosophical question as well as a religious one, and you can readily see the reasons for the difference made in our favor."

"Men's morals were doubtless bad enough in days of old," she said, "but whatever might have been their treat-

ment of women in some respects, she had, at least, the pleasure, generally, of having a brave, manly man for her husband—rough, maybe, but chivalrous and noble-hearted. Now, alas! we are asked to be contented with those who have neither purity nor brains nor valor. Do you suppose a woman with a true heart and depth of feeling will be won by the drivel of the society men of this day? Will she be content to pass her life with one whose sole aim is amusement, and who is not moved by any noble ambition?"

"You ask me too many conundrums at once," I said, laughing quietly.

She smiled herself, and then continued pleasantly:

"I trust to you, Mr. Conway, not to repeat what I have said. Not that I am ashamed of it, but I fear I am too violent and radical for this age. Besides, it might spur someone on to make original love to me, and I fear I should laugh."

There was a dangerous gleam in her eyes, although she was smiling. It seemed as if she was trying to convey a covert warning.

Here was a girl, though, whose love was certainly worth the effort of winning.

I can readily understand why the residents in tropical regions never care to work, but live on in their thoughtless, idle life, unmoved by the spurning feet of Time. Summer-time at such a place as Newport exercised much the same influence over my feelings. I was loath to think of the complications in which I was entangled, and lived on from day to day, only taking thought for the present.

Life at Newport is much the same as at other fashionable watering-places, and to relate the doings of one day would be to give in substance that of all. We arose late in the morning, usually; breakfasted in a *dolce-far-niente* sort

of a way, and then sat about on the lawn or piazzas and chatted or looked over the papers and went down to the Casino. Sometimes, later on in the morning, we went to the beach or strolled on the rocks with the girls. After luncheon we drove, and after dinner there was generally a dance or entertainment at one of the many cottages or at the Casino. This latter was also a great lounging-place during the morning.

As I have already said, Alice and myself were constant companions, and I was earnest in my attentions to her. I flattered myself that I was above the ordinary society man at whom she scoffed so freely; yet I could not say that I had succeeded in making any very strong impression on her feelings. Certainly she allowed me to attend her everywhere, and appeared to value my services greatly. She accepted my flowers and books, or such other little odds and ends as men often give to girls, with little thankful ways which amply repaid the giver. But all this was no criterion of her affection. There are few who will not accept such from their ordinary male acquaintance, even though they care nothing for him and know that they are leading him on to declarations which they will not accept.

Not that I blame them for that. A man should not suppose that, because a woman receives those things which she cannot well relieve herself of without rudeness, she is therefore ready to accept him for her husband.

I did not try making love to Alice in the ordinary acceptance of the term. We discussed affections, as we did almost everything else, but I had never actually declared myself. I was her obedient servant, always about when I was wanted, and yet ready to resign my position to others for a time when I could not be at her side without a too evident insistence. I tried throughout all my association

with her to preserve a manly dignity and character, for this I knew was one of her loves.

I will not occupy you with any very long description of my stay at Newport, as my object is to give you a history of life in the city, for the most part. One incident, however, I must relate before I turn over this leaf in my story. It will serve to indicate Alice's character to you, while, at the same time, it will show how society requires us to overlook offences on the part of its members, which under certain circumstances would be highly condemned.

I fancy the most beautiful walk in the world is that on the cliff at Newport, but I am aware that the subject is hackneyed, and I do not intend any detailed description of the joys of peregrination there. The fault of most of the panegyrics which have been uttered about it is, that they only describe it at noonday, eve, or midnight, while, as a matter of fact, the time at which it is most beautiful is just about daybreak. You will perhaps wonder why I can say this, for you will imagine that, as a society man, I would sleep late in summer as well as in winter. My ability to give an opinion arose in this way:

Though I had never seen the walk at daybreak, I was one evening trying to induce Alice to believe in my description of the beauties of the walk at early morn, and to arise early and try it with me.

At last she promised to do so, and she said she would meet me on the Van Wasson's piazza.

Roland Randall, Charlie Van Wasson, and myself sat up until nearly daybreak and played poker, and I found by that time that I had given them nearly a hundred dollars. We broke up the game at last, and I threw myself on the bed to snatch a few moments of sleep. I meant to be

awake in time to meet Alice, but I had been drinking somewhat freely and was feeling very tired.

When I awoke the sun was shining through my windows, which proved to me that I had overslept myself. Still, it was very early as yet. I went to the window and looked out toward the point. I could see no sign of Alice at or near the Van Wasson's, but from the window commanding a view in the other direction I could see a girl's figure some distance along the cliff, which I was confident was hers.

I made a hasty ablution, threw on a Norfolk jacket of large plaid, and in a few moments was making my way with hasty steps in the direction of the figure. As I reached the top of one of the many hillocks over which the path runs, I saw Alice on the succeeding one and noticed that she was coming toward me. She was still some distance away. Behind her I saw a man who was walking rapidly, though with unsteady steps, seemingly with the intention of overtaking her. Strangely enough, at that hour of the morning, in such a spot, he was in full evening dress. His shirt-front shone clear and white in the morning light.

I quickened my pace. At a point immediately ahead of me was a high, dense hedge, and before coming to this I was compelled to descend quite a hollow. For a time Alice and her pursuer were lost to my sight.

When I issued from behind the hedge I saw that the man had overtaken her and that they had both stopped. I was less than a hundred feet away and I heard her say :

"If you do not leave me instantly I will teach you a lesson in manners which you will not soon forget."

The man seemed to me intoxicated. He murmured something, in a drunken way, which I could not catch the

import of and moved nearer to her, as if about to take her arm.

In an instant I saw her raise the riding-stock, which she carried as a cane, and strike the man a blow which knocked his hat off and must have hurt his head.

By this time I was running rapidly toward them and Alice saw me. She turned and hurried in my direction. The man was evidently infuriated and pursued her. As I came nearer to them I could see that he was under the influence of liquor, and he was, as a consequence, not able to make any very rapid headway.

When Alice reached me she said in a very agitated tone:

"Do protect me from that man!"

"All right," I answered in a cheerful tone of voice.

The man came on in his blundering way as though he was going to run over me. I stood to one side, just ere he reached me, and tripped him up with my foot. He fell like a log.

Judging him by his appearance he was a gentleman, as we use the word. He was heavily built, with dark hair, and full, round, sensual face, that somehow reminded me of one of the later Roman emperors. It showed clearly a fondness for high-living and heavy drinking—the latter enjoyment he had evidently but just left.

He turned over and raised himself to a half-sitting position and looked at us in a stupid, dazed sort of a way.

"If you were not drunk," I said, "I would certainly give you a thorough thrashing. Don't you know better than to insult a lady?"

"Who you, anyhow?" he queried in an intoxicated way.

"Come," I said to Alice, "let us go back. This man is hardly accountable for what he has done."

We turned and moved away.

"Say—all right—mush apologize, s'pose; no 'fence, ye know," we heard him murmur as we did so. He was still half-lying, half-sitting as we walked back toward our cottages.

We had not proceeded far when we discovered a well-built, active-looking young fellow coming toward us. He doffed his hat when he neared us and said:

"I am afraaid maaster's been disturbing you. Really, you must pardon him. Hee's been out to a supper-party, you see, and I was just on my way there to bring him home. If you will give me your card, sir, I will take the liberty of explain'g the matter to him when he is better."

His clear, broad pronunciation marked him for an Englishman, evidently the imported valet of the fellow we had encountered.

"No matter," I said.

He replaced his hat and passed on to where his master was trying to raise himself to a standing position. When I looked back, as we reached the next incline, we saw them, arm-in-arm, making their way, rather unsteadily it is true, over one of the lawns.

Alice was very pale and nervous, and very much agitated by her unfortunate encounter.

"Mind! you are to say nothing of this," she said. She would not tell me what the man had said to her, only that he was very insulting.

She was quite ill all day and kept to her room, but in the evening she came down for a time, and by the next morning she seemed quite in her usual good health and spirits.

On the following afternoon I received an invitation through Roland to a dinner to be given by Alex De Haven, one of the wealthiest young men of New York. He owned

a cottage at Newport, and was prominent in all society's amusements. Not having any other engagements, of course I accepted. At seven o'clock we were on hand.

We drove up the avenue of one of the most charming places on the cliff, and were ushered into a reception-room furnished with great splendor and no inconsiderable taste.

I heard Roland say :

"Alex, my friend Dick Conway, who is staying with us."

A stout, red-faced young man held out his hand and took my own in a warm, firm, manly sort of a grasp, and looked me straight in the eyes as though to say, "I will explain later." He was the man I had tripped up on the previous morning.

In society, of course, one gets used to meetings of this kind. What could a fellow do, anyhow? Alice did not wish her name connected with the adventure of the previous day. It would only have caused much gossip, which would have been exceedingly disgusting to her and have accomplished nothing. I thought the best way to treat the affair, therefore, was to pass it over as a little inequality of the social road, and only laugh at the jar it gave.

Indeed, to be frank, I found Alex a very clever fellow. The dinner was tasteful and jolly—the best viands and wine and a thoroughly congenial company of men.

Toward the close of the dinner Alex called me aside.

"By Gawge," he said, "I thought Miss Carlton was only a maid, you know. I was really not myself, anyhow, I fancy. My beast of a man failed to come for me in time. I was at a dinner, you know. I started to walk home by myself. It was a most unfortunate mistake."

"I saw how it was," I said, "or I fear I should have treated you more harshly. As it was, I must ask your pardon for my roughness."

"Haw! haw!" he laughed. "I like that; you talk boldly. But, you see, if I had been sober we should have had no occasion to quarrel, and if I had been sober and we had quarrelled, I fear I should have been too much for you, really. See here!" and he made a fist and raised his arm. His muscles were like iron when I felt them.

"You ought to have kicked me black and blue, as it was," he continued. "I wish you would apologize to Miss Carlton for me, the best you can; say anything."

We had many gay times together after this. Alex was one of the foremost in the fashionable world, and was a really good-natured would-be Englishman. He was a man of ready wit and considerable strength of mind. There was something fascinating about him, and most people could not resist his influence. He had a frank nature, and even in his vices was open.

But Alice would never forgive him. It is true I did not know exactly what he had said to her, but it seemed to me she treated him rather severely. A real gentleman is always a gentleman, she said. Naturally, she met Alex at social entertainments after this, but she would only bow to him when he was presented, and I think he made no effort to apologize, for she gave him no chance. I think the Randalls and Van Wassons marvelled at her peculiar treatment of him, but, of course, I never let them into the secret.

For my own part, I think she should have forgiven Alex. Anyone of us might have been placed in such a position. But all women cannot understand those things.

The life of society men at Newport was not all spent in the company of their sisters' friends. The under world was, to a large entent, imported from New York for the season, and the carousing was something extraordinary. There

was one resort, in particular, fitted up, down in the old town, where was to be found all the gayety of city life. In the winter season not a few of the society men are restrained, more or less, in their enjoyments by their business engagements, but in summer-time they all meet on a common plane. The "next day" is the same to all. As a consequence it was no uncommon thing to see men who remained in an almost steady state of intoxication for days at a time. True, during the day they were about, but their enjoyments were plainly discernible by more senses than one.

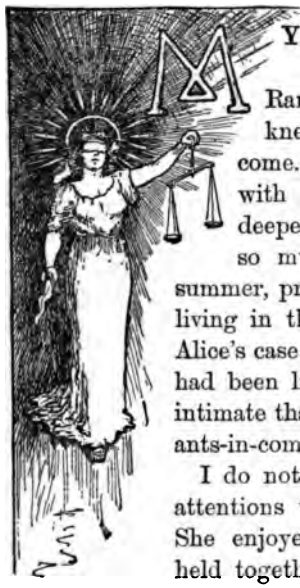
At the Casino, in the mornings, I have often seen them *tête à tête* with some charming woman when they were in such a condition that they were not steady on their feet as they walked.

But then, as was well said, "Everybody drinks in the summer-time."

CHAPTER X.

IN SEARCH OF AMUSEMENT.

"Once more into the breach, dear friends, once more."



MY stay at Newport at last came to a close. I had been with the Randalls almost a month, but I knew I had not outstayed my welcome. During this time my intimacy with Alice Carlton grew deeper and deeper. At no time can a man learn so much of a girl's character as in summer, provided he has the opportunity of living in the same house with her; and in Alice's case it was almost the same as if we had been living so. The families were so intimate that they might be said to be tenants-in-common of their respective houses.

I do not think my constant and earnest attentions were without effect upon Alice. She enjoyed deeply the conversations we held together, for they were out of the ordinary way, and, as I have said, she received all the many favors I did her with as much grace as if we were plighted lovers; yet throughout it all we seemed to grow comparatively little nearer in point of honest affection.

It is true I was handicapped by my entanglements with

Ann and Agnes, yet, despite of these, such was my interest in this woman that I would have taken great risks and cast responsibilities to the winds had I felt in my heart that I was gifted with the power to stir the depths of her soul to love.

She often favored me at the expense of others, but through it all she held herself with that quiet dignity and reserve of manner which prevented any familiarity and was calculated to awe a thoughtful man. I could never have accused her of leading me on to any pronounced declaration. But her reserve only served to spur on my feelings. She was truly a girl of noble character and steadfast heart.

I have said that in summer-time men come to know women very well, but I do not think the saying can be inverted. How much do most of the young girls know of the character of the men they meet and become intimate with in summer? If a man has an opportunity of seeing a girl morning, noon, and eve, he will likely have his attention directed to most of those qualities which may be of a kind to annoy him. But these small social errors to a great extent constitute her failings.

She may see like social faults in him, but while she thinks these trifles are the main defects in his character, they are often but the indices of worse things.

Where are his evenings spent when he "drops down to the club," or "calls on a friend," or "goes down the street a little way?" Can he always come home and give a truthful account of what he has done in the meantime?

Did Alice suspect some of my deeper failings, and was she biassed against my familiarity on this account? Or was it simply her character, cold and difficult to arouse? After much consideration I deemed the latter hypothesis

was the correct one, for her behavior with men in general was a proof of it to a great extent.

During all my stay at Newport I was constantly in correspondence with Agnes. Several times I had arranged to go over to the little island and see her, but I was prevented by the attractions of the place where I was staying. My letters to her, however, were redolent of my affection, and I believe I managed to keep her in a fairly good humor until we met; then, of course, I persuaded her that all my faults were my misfortunes.

My good-bye to Alice was not in any way tinged with sentiment—on her side at least; though I fear I was more deeply affected than you would consider possible in view of my position.

I joined Agnes and her mother and my father on the boat at Newport. Nothing worth recording took place during our passage home. Agnes was as beautiful to me as ever, and if the hours were delightful coming up on the steamer, you can imagine the joys of our return as plighted lovers.

It was about the beginning of October when we reached home. Many of the occupants of houses on the fashionable streets were taking the boards down from their windows, and marble fronts were being cleaned and window-frames and doors repainted. But society itself was extremely quiet. Men having business were, of course, seen on the streets, and a few girls, disappointed in their summer hunt for husbands, were to be observed on Walnut Street, on Sundays after church, strolling along in a very disconsolate sort of a way; but the swell men and the gay society girls were out at country places or the inns which are so numerous in the suburbs.

My father preferred to open his house in town, as he h

business which needed all his attention, and I spent much of my time there. I made flying trips of a day or two in duration to some of the near-by watering-places, though I did not stay long.

If I do not tell you much about my business, as I go on with these confessions, it is because I wish this to be a book on purely social topics. I was by no means inactive in a business way, though, as you may suppose, my profession suffered somewhat from my late hours and over-indulgences. My father's position as president of one of the largest banking institutions in the city enabled him to throw considerable business in my way, and I managed it generally to the satisfaction of my clients. To be sure, my practice was at no time large enough to overwork a reasonably active man.

Agnes and her mother were staying at one of the suburban inns, and of course I saw much of the former, as befitted my relations with her, though as yet they were unannounced to either her mother or the world of society.

Girls are generally easy to control if you only approach them in the right way. They should be led into believing that they are having their own way, when in fact you are leading them in yours. They should in no case be driven. But no matter how you may control them, one of the most difficult things is to prevent them from announcing an engagement when you particularly wish it kept secret. I had found it so with Ann Houghton, and now in a much greater degree with Agnes, who was a girl of such sweet, innocent character that she could not be well persuaded into secrecy. The word itself seemed out of place in her thoughts.

I heard from Ann regularly, dear little girl, and she seemed to continue her affection for me. "When I return, at the end of next month," she wrote, "we will, of course, announce our engagement at once."

What could I reply but, "Certainly we will"? I was compelled to add, however, "Pray keep it a dense secret until your return. I will explain all when I see you."

Two or three days afterward, when I went to call on Agnes, her mother called me aside and informed me that Agnes had that day announced to her our engagement. "She tells me," she said, "that you were engaged when you left Nantucket. I am sorry you delayed so long in informing me, but I do not know that I have any particular objection to you, save that you are dependent, to a large extent, on your father for means of support. Agnes has some money of her own, but I should prefer that you should be independent also in that respect."

I told her that I thought my father would amply supply me with the necessities of the occasion; and then I became quite enthusiastic over my business prospects—not that I really believed much in them, but because it gave an earnest atmosphere to my future.

You may be sure I did not blame Agnes for her announcement of our engagement, though I could not help thinking what an unpleasant thing it would be if she and Ann Houghton should be brought together under certain circumstances.

People with bad consciences are restless sleepers, I have been told. My conscience must, therefore, be good, for I am seldom disturbed. After retiring on this evening, however, I must confess to a feeling of uneasiness at my position. I lay awake a long time, musing how I was to steer my delicate boat through the troubled sea of social life which now confronted me. Many were the plans I devised for breaking my engagement with Ann, for it was a matter now of some immediate importance, and needed my present attention. I wished to consummate it with as

little pain and trouble to her and to myself as was possible under the circumstances. I wished particularly that Agnes might never hear of it, except perhaps as one of those vague rumors which have an early death.

It was a delicate subject, and one upon which I found it very difficult to reach a definite or satisfactory conclusion. I at last dismissed it from my mind, after determining to wait until morning before I made a decision on any plan of action, and, turning over, I was soon sleeping the sleep of the just. In the morning I did not feel in the humor to trouble about it, and read an interesting novel.

It was well I did not worry myself too much about any plan, for Chance, who often is a very useful girl, stepped in and decided for me. It was not a very pleasant way that she provided, it is true, but altogether it was about as good as any I could have devised and was wonderfully effective—almost too much so, indeed.

As I sat in my office, about four o'clock in the afternoon following, Roland Randall, Con Creighton, and a young fellow by the name of Cecil Prescott came in. Prescott was a *débutant* in our society, having lately been taken up by Ed Houghton, who was a well-known society man, and appeared to vouch for his friend. He was said to be of an old Southern family, and he certainly had the manners of a gentleman. He turned out quite a character afterward, and I am particular in calling attention to him.

He was tall and rather slim, with pale face, weak mouth, long nose, gray, restless eyes, and hair worn brushed almost straight up from his forehead—much after the style adopted by the German professors. He was not the kind of a man I should have trusted with any honest mission, but he was much liked by the girls. He talked nonsense to

them fluently, and danced like an angel, as one of them told me.

Roland informed me that he had just returned from Newport and was in the humor for some fun. It was arranged that we should dine together and then amuse ourselves in some way to be settled upon during the meal. It was, of course, agreeable to me, as Agnes had an engagement somewhere, and I was not to see her that evening.

Roland said that his family would return the following week, and that Alice had arranged to come back with them. "I thought you were badly hit there, Dick," he said.

"No, no! you are quite mistaken," I answered, laughing lightly; "my fate lies in another direction, as you will see before long."

I was not sure I should not have said, "in two different directions."

"Tell me all about it," he said.

"All in good time, my dear fellow," I answered.

Society men are not usually confiding with their men friends as to love matters, no matter how intimate they may be in other ways. I do not know whether it is because they cannot trust each other, or whether they lack the honesty of character which needs sympathy, but usually they are not confiding. For myself, I had ample excuse, as you know; I could never see the use of hunting in couples, at least of the same sex. I am highly self-willed, and I can manage most of the affairs of this life to suit myself without advice, and I did not care to be communicative with Roland at present.

We dined at the Belleview. We matched to see who should pay. Roland was the unlucky one. We had dinner *à la carte* and wines likewise, and it was well toward ten o'clock when we finished.

During the course of the meal we had much discussion as to how we should spend the evening, and it was finally decided that we should explore the dance-houses and variety shows of the town somewhat in detail. Ronald Randall and Con Creighton, though rather wild and hot headed, were capital men to go with on an expedition of this kind, and were brave and muscular to a degree, and well able to hold their own in a row. Of Prescott, I knew nothing. He talked quite bravely, but I did not think he could be relied on to any great extent in case of trouble. For myself, I will not be egotistical. I am not heavily built, but wiry and somewhat active when I am called on to exert myself.

I do not mean to say that I anticipated any great trouble, but the places we proposed to visit were, many of them, of a kind where those who are dressed well are apt to be greeted with derision, if not actual violence. Of course, we were all in a more or less excited condition, owing to the wine we had taken at dinner, and hence were likely to reply if spoken to.

It is not my purpose to give you a detailed statement of our wanderings that night. It would doubtless prove interesting, but would not be what, for want of a better term, I must call "proper." It is at just such a point as this that I feel the hopelessness of my task. My object is to be frank and open with you, and tell you the story of my life as it has been lived. But there are many scenes in the lives of our society men which, while they are sometimes brought to light in our divorce courts, will not do for an autobiography such as this, which is primarily written for the perusal of polite society. Society may know that such scenes take place, but woe to him who describes them in detail.

You will see why it is that the novelists of our day take a society girl rather than a man as the subject of their works. They have a great advantage over one who chooses a man. The former subject may be gay and frivolous, but her life can be detailed from year to year down to the minutest particulars—nothing concealed—and yet in no way will her actions seem really offensive, and there will be nothing in it all to seriously trouble the moralist. This same plan cannot be followed in any case as to a society man's life; nor can I tell you all our adventures on that night.

Let it suffice to say, as to most of the evening, that we made a grand tour of many of the places of interest in the way of saloons and variety shows. In a large number of these the price of admission was the purchase of a drink of some kind. Ordinarily we should not have touched the liquor thus dealt out, but we had, as I have said, drunk freely before we started on our expedition, and we were not as careful as we might have been.

At about 1.30 A.M. we entered the doorway of Doc Muzzler's place, on a small cross street running south from South Street. At this time the whole of our party were well under the influence of the liquors we had taken. I believe I was the soberest of all—at least I recall the events of the evening more clearly than the others.

The bar-room was small, and the rear end of it was occupied by a pool-table, at which a number of men were playing. About three-quarters of their number were men of various degrees of color, while the others were white. In one respect alone were they all alike—they were toughs and desperadoes of the lowest class.

The sounds of a violin and a squeaky piano, both sadly out of tune, were heard coming from the rear of the place,

and we knew that here was the object of our visit—a dance-hall, which was said to be the worst place in the city.

We ordered some of the vile drinks which were dispensed at the bar, but, much as we were under the influence of liquor, we had enough sense left not to do more than touch them to our lips, and then we passed through the narrow passage-way which led to the assembly-room or, more properly, dance-hall.

We were all accustomed to sights and not easily startled, but even in our condition we should probably have quitted the place in disgust had it not been for Con. The women and the men who were taking part in the exercises were of the most abandoned character—crime was written on every face, and what was worse than all, the atmosphere of the place was abominable; it was dense with bad tobacco-smoke and reeking with noisome smells.

At this hour of the night the place was crowded, and the dancing was wild, the fun fast and furious. For my part, I was interested in the curious phases of human nature found here, but I could not find it in my heart to take part in the pleasures of the place. Even in my vices I strive to be refined. I could not help wondering with what eyes one of this company would have looked on at one of our assemblies, and whether it would seem as curious to his or her eyes as this scene was to mine. One thing I am certain they would have remarked; that was the costumes our belles of the assembly wore, for here were no low necks and short sleeves to be seen. To be sure, there were one or two men with their coats off, but, after all, a coat is a very superfluous garment at a ball. Had one of the females of this assemblage made her appearance here in the ball-dress of some one of her more refined sisters, I fear her life would not have been a happy one.

Neither Randall nor Prescott was inclined to indulge actively in the fun of the place, but Con spied a girl, sitting along the wall toward the middle of the hall, who seemed to attract him, and he made his way toward her. She was certainly the only one present who could in any way lay claim to good looks. When I came to examine her closely I found that she was really a very handsome woman, though evidently with dark blood in her veins.

A moment after Con joined her they started out on a wild dance together.

I had noticed several of the roughs eying us suspiciously, and I heard a number of remarks which were evidently intended for us; but no overt demonstration was made until Con began to take an active part in the exercises. Then many of the couples who had been waltzing ceased, and finally Con and his partner were the only ones on the floor dancing. He was evidently enjoying himself to the extreme, as was his partner. The manner in which they spun over the floor was worth watching, Con every now and then giving utterance to a loud "whoop."

Finally the music stopped, and Con started to lead his partner to a seat.

Then we saw a dark-skinned, burly ruffian step up to him, and heard him say:

"What yo' do har, anyways? Why don't you let my gal alone?"

We noticed now that others were moving in the direction of these three, and we started forward ourselves.

Then we saw the colored man grasp the girl by the arm, trying to induce her to leave Con, which, with a woman's wilfulness, she refused to do. The next moment her man was stretched at length on the floor by a straight-out blow from Con. At the moment he struck, the girl left his side.

and he rushed vigorously toward us and succeeded in dividing the line of men between us, and we were together. So rapid had been the whole affray, thus far, that there had been no time to arouse much opposition to his joining us.

We were sober enough to realize that we were in a very dangerous predicament. The colored tough is the worst. He is seldom without a pistol, slung-shot, or razor, and he uses them when excited with an utter disregard as to the consequences.

"Boys, if we can get out of here at once, I am in favor of it," I said.

This plan seemed to meet with the views of all, and we moved toward the door which led into the bar-room, the only exit that offered. In that direction the hall was clear, the men who had been there, including the musicians, having moved toward Con when the trouble began.

But in the excitement consequent on the knock-down, even a slow retreat aroused the crowd to a sense of our weakness, and they cried:

"Down with the dudes! Give it to them!"

With these and similar calls of encouragement, they began a united advance on us. Ere we reached the door the occupants of the bar-room, aroused by the uproar, appeared in the doorway and passage beyond, evidently in a humor for helping their friends who were advancing on us in the other direction.

Our escape being cut off, it seemed we must fight for it. To surrender meant a terrible beating, perhaps death. In the nearest corner of the room was a triangular platform for the musicians, and on this was a piano.

"Get on the platform, boys!" I said, and in a moment we were there. "Now move one end of the piano against the wall, so we can use it as a barricade," I continued.

Thus arranged, we were well fixed for a hand-to-hand conflict, so long as pistols were not used. Besides our fists, we had but two weapons. One was a large walking-stick which I carried, and the other was a slung-shot possessed by Prescott. We had no fire-arms. Society men, as a rule, do not carry them. They are apt to get a man into trouble if he chance to be arrested on a trifling charge ; and then, too, when under the influence of liquor, one is sometimes tempted to use them when they are not really needed.

We were compelled to be very active. The crowd did not stay to parley ; they rushed on us *en masse*, led by the big ruffian whom Con had floored. He jumped on to the stage, only to be met by the hard side of Con's fist and to fall back into the arms of his comrades.

A burly mulatto took his place, and grasped Con ere he could recover. I should have gone to his assistance, but a big fellow, as black as the ace of spades, tried to grapple with me. I grasped my cane with both hands at the lighter end, and hit him a blow on his woolly head that could be heard all over the room. Con was wrestling with his second man and Roland was also engaged with one. I could get no chance to strike the man who had gripped Con, but I gave him such a terrific poke in the ribs that he cried out in agony. The next moment Con flung him clear over his head on to the heads of the crowd before him. Such was the effect that no less than four of them went down under this human catapult. None of them was very seriously injured, but the moral effect was good, and as Roland had also been successful in flooring his man our enemies seemed to appreciate that we were fighters, even though we were "dudes," and they paused in their attack.

Now that we had a moment to look about us, we saw that

more than one pistol had been drawn and that several razors gleamed.

I confess I was deeply frightened. These men were ruffians, and when infuriated would stop at nothing. Still, I did not show my fear. Prescott was the coward of the party. He had done nothing but crouch behind the piano and shiver, and now he wanted to surrender. I shall never forget the look of concentrated disgust which Con gave him. None of us paid any attention to him after that.

What the end might have been no one can say, but at this moment the head of a policeman appeared in the doorway, and his body soon followed into the room. There were four others in his wake. It is the only occasion when I have known them to come at the time they were wanted. They were a portion of a relief squad who had been passing, and had been notified of the trouble by the girl Con had danced with, who, with the peculiarity of her sex, had taken such a liking to Con, on their short acquaintance, that she would have done more for him than for her own man.

The proprietor of the place charged us with being drunk and disorderly, and he was loudly supported by all the assemblage. The policemen accordingly notified us that we were under arrest. Never were four men happier to be taken under police care, though in the form of an arrest. Even Con, fighter as he was, did not like the looks of that crowd, and was sobered by the near danger.

We were taken to the station-house and kept there until the following morning, when a hearing was held. As I happened to know the committing magistrate very well, and as no one appeared against us save the officers, we were discharged on our own recognizances, *à la mikado.*

We had been arrested so late in the night that nothing

appeared in the morning papers about the affray; but when the policeman was telling his story of our arrest, I could see the eye of the police reporters on us, and I read in them the hopes of a big "take" for the afternoon, being an account of how four promising representatives of the élite had been arrested for disorderly conduct, at two o'clock in the morning, in the lowest dive in the city.

We took a light breakfast together, and I told the fellows that I feared the papers would give us undue prominence in the afternoon editions. As I chanced to be acquainted with a number of the city or local editors of the papers, I was appointed a committee of one to wait on them generally, and see what could be done to stop publication of our last evening's escapade.

I found the city editors a very jolly lot of fellows, and disposed to look on the matter as a joke, and save us from notoriety by leaving names out entirely in their report of the matter, or substituting others. But unfortunately I had offended one of them about a month before, by refusing to let him into the details of a divorce suit in which I was junior counsel. This man laughed, but said he guessed we wouldn't mind the publication much. I threatened him with a libel suit, but he said they had over a dozen on hand already, and that one or two more would make no great difference.

That afternoon appeared in his paper a long account, with displayed head-lines, giving our names in full, with all the particulars of our adventure.

By some chance, fortunate or unfortunate, I do not know which, a copy of this paper was sent to Mrs. Houghton. Perhaps some dear friend of mine sent her a copy with the offensive article marked in blue pencil—there is always someone to perform such offices for you. As a matter of

fact, I always suspected Jack Isaacs of having done it. After-events pointed to him.

Five days afterward came a letter from Mrs. Houghton, in which she said that she had read the account of my disgraceful doings, and had learned with sorrow from Ann that we considered ourselves engaged to be married. Ann's agitation on reading the article had aroused her suspicions, and she had confessed all to her. Mrs. Houghton wished to inform me that after my disgusting behavior she must refuse her consent to any such arrangements, and she was glad to say that her daughter joined her in hoping that she might never be troubled by my attentions again.

She also hoped I would be enough of a gentleman to refrain from any mention outside of my relations with Ann. Indeed, under the present circumstances, there was no likelihood of my doing so. But she had not heard of my engagement to Agnes yet.

I wrote back a cutting note, in which I spoke of condemning a man without a hearing or giving him a chance to justify himself, and closed with regrets at the severance of our pleasant relations; but I did not ask that a time be fixed for a hearing of my case.

To this I received no response.

The story of our adventure was the prevailing topic in society for a long time. Club-rooms, balls, and parlors echoed with it, and the talk did not abate for several weeks. I was safely off with my engagement to Ann Houghton; but what of Agnes Moore?

Who will say that there are not compensations in all the events of life? It is true I had acquired, temporarily, a rather unpleasant notoriety, but it was not without its benefit.

CHAPTER XI.

A FAIR MISSIONARY.

"Deep as love—deep as first love."

N the evening following our escapade, I told my father of the occurrence. I merely said at first that we had wished to see the slums, and had unfortunately gotten into a quarrel with some of the natives, but that we were not the aggressors, but were compelled to defend ourselves.

I have never been able to quite understand father. He is a regular member of the Roman Catholic Church, and seems to regard the principles of morality in social life; yet I do not remember ever hearing him express any decided views, one way or another, on the subject, and he certainly never ventured to rebuke me. Once in a while he may have expressed a

mild opinion about my actions. I presumed that if it was a matter likely to bring disgrace on his name, he would take it to heart more, and so I made my account of the affair as innocent for us as I could. I did not tell him at first of the newspaper publication, and he had evidently not seen it, for he simply said:

"Humph! better keep out of such places in future."

"The worst of it all is that the *Evening Vampire* has published the whole affray," I continued, "and has given a most untruthful and disgraceful account of the matter, in which we are held up to laughter and contempt."

I saw an angry light in his eyes as he turned toward me, yet he did not speak for some moments.

"Well," he said, finally, "what is the use telling me about it? You can't do anything to quell gossip now, can you?"

"Not generally, I suppose," I answered, "but, to tell you the truth, there is one quarter in which I must keep matters straight, and that is with Agnes Moore. I may as well announce to you now that I am engaged to be married to her, and I fear that when this comes to her ears and those of her mother, it will place me in a very unfavorable light."

I do not think he was in any way prepared for my announcement, for it seemed to astonish him very much. There came an expression of pain over his face. Why was it? I could not clearly know. Mrs. Moore was a lovely woman not over forty years of age, and the governor was not beyond the years for marrying. Did he have intentions of this kind? He could not well marry my mother-in-law, nor I my step-sister.

However, the look of trouble passed away quickly, and he said, in his laconic way:

"Well, what do you wish me to do for you?"

"I thought," I answered, "that if you would go with me to see Agnes and her mother this evening, we should be ahead of the story, probably, or at least arrive before it has taken root. If you will anticipate it with Mrs. Moore, and I do the same with Agnes, I think we can prevent the tale taking any deep hold. They will also be able to correct any exaggerated reports which may be circulated."

"Very well," he answered, "we will go out in the eight o'clock train."

The copy-book moralist says that "a wrong confessed is half redressed," and so a true story in the newspapers, met by a denial from the parties implicated, is generally of little moment in the long run—particularly to those biassed in your favor.

A story will be talked over by everyone and believed by some, but society does not care to assume the position of believing all that is said about its members, for it might result in disintegrating the fashionable sets. They are glad of the opportunity to gossip, but will turn round and defend you if some leader will only start the fashion—much on the same principle that they rush from one extreme to another in dress.

I gave my father a full account of our adventure, as we went out in the train. I was truthful as to most of the facts, only concealing enough to give him an idea that the story in the newspaper was a gross exaggeration, and that we had really been rescued by the police from a most unwarranted attack.

I do not know exactly what he told Mrs. Moore, but the effect was quite satisfactory. I cannot believe that he made out any better case for us than I did with her daughter. I explained to her that we had gone "slumming," which is

appellation society gives to visiting the herding-places of the low classes. I told her that we were under the care of a legal guide, in the form of a special officer, who had in the end deserted us, and that we were in danger of our lives from an attack of ruffians. Fortunately some policemen rescued us, after we had given an exhibition of our fighting qualities. I did not forget, in conclusion, to allude to the story in that vile sheet, the *Evening Vampire*, which was slanderous and false in the extreme, as was shown by the fact that none of the respectable papers had published any such account.

Mrs. Moore was a society woman, and was accustomed to look at things from a society point of view, but, at the same time, she was a woman of strong religious belief, and I knew no girl who had received a more careful training on social morality than Agnes. It was not the purity of ignorance which she possessed, but that which came from a knowledge of the existence of evils, and a determination to keep her mind free from them. How impossible, in this condition of things, would it have been to have told her truthfully of all the doings of the preceding evening and still have retained her love. Yet I think women are disposed to forgive much evil in the past of their lovers, if they think they can claim their devotion for the future. I am sure it is only on such an hypothesis that some of them find heart to marry the men they do.

Agnes appeared satisfied with my explanation, and promised to deny any version of the story which did not agree with the facts—or rather my facts.

Mrs. Moore did not mention the matter to me that evening, but as we returned to the city I asked my father what she thought of the affair.

"Well," he replied, "I made the best of the matter, and

I do not think she will allow it to prejudice her views of you; but I advise you to be more careful in the future. She has heard rumors of several other adventures of yours, not of a kind to redound to your credit, and if you intend to continue your engagement with Agnes, it might be well for you to be more circumspect."

To this I did not reply. After a time I spoke to him of my possible marriage with Agnes. I told him I did not propose to marry for some time yet, but I should like to know what he thought of it.

"I see no material objection," he answered. "As to money matters, I suppose they can be arranged. I spoke to Mrs. Moore of it. You will inherit all of my fortune, which is large, and she is well off. Most of the property she has is held by her for life only, and will revert to Agnes on her death."

With this explanation I was obliged to be content. It was seldom, indeed, that I could induce father to talk so much.

It was arranged that my engagement to Agnes should not be announced for about a month. Mrs. Moore seemed rather disposed to delay it. Perhaps she thought it was well to let society gossip out the story of my escapade. In the meanwhile Agnes and I were constantly together. I took rooms at the inn where she was staying, in order to be near her.

The story of our adventure was a prominent topic in society for several weeks. It was greatly distorted—some making heroes of us, others proving us to be the lowest of the low. I told you what a coward Prescott was, but, as may be supposed, he made himself out a perfect terror in the descriptions which he gave of the affair, and assured listeners that he alone had floored five men with his fists.

In a short time the whole matter blew over, and, in the end, I think we were possibly the gainers by it, as it left a slight halo of the heroic about our heads. The girls, at least, did not find fault with us. I have no doubt I could have reconciled Ann Houghton to a belief in my innocence, but I did not care to do so at present. With many of our society girls the reputation of fastness which a man may gain seems to carry a recommendation with it. I do not say this of their mothers; but what mothers control their daughters' acquaintances among the opposite sex nowadays? A man may see a girl a hundred times before he even knows her mother by sight, and may even ask her to be his wife while his mind is in a state of doubt as to her mother's existence.

I have many times heard girls, whom I knew were pure and good, say—"Oh! I would not marry a man unless he had seen the world," or "He's a little fast, you know, but such a charming fellow," or "I don't want a slow man, he's apt to go wrong after he marries."

I have ofttimes doubted if they could have truly comprehended what "seeing the world" or "fastness" means in the vocabulary of our men of modern society. If they did know even one tithe of what they spoke about, it is a matter of astonishment that they could speak so. I say this, as you know, not from a sense of moral responsibility on the subject, but looking at the matter from a standpoint of social economy. Perhaps these confessions may be of value in giving them some ideas on this subject.

The inn at which we were staying was very fashionable, the best people in the city being the chief patrons of it. Many of our winter friends were there, for at this season of the year they had returned from their summer stay at the watering-places and mountains, but found it too early to occupy their city homes.

Among others was Ed Houghton, whom I have casually mentioned before. He was a young man of about two-and-twenty, possessed of a remarkably striking figure—tall and graceful. He had a finely formed head, almost classical in its dignity of outline, and covered with light, wavy golden hair; his face, however, on which he wore no beard save a small moustache, was boyish and insincere. He was noted for his expensive dressing—running chiefly in the direction of loud plaids; and many stories were related of his extravagances in this way.

His only occupation in life was leading an enormous English stag-hound about the streets by a chain. He was, indeed, more noted for his dog than for himself.

He was absolutely unreliable. His chief delight was in inventing fabulous stories, in which he was the hero, and in breaking any appointment he made. If he had a true story which was good, he would tell a poor, false one in preference. If he made an engagement which he really wished to keep, he would fail to keep it in order to disappoint the other party. Yet he had many nice qualities. He was companionable in the extreme, and, when you came to know him, was a man of some brains and wit—much more than he was given credit for.

He it was who had introduced Mr. Cecil Prescott among us, and both of them were sojourners at the inn.

Belle Manly was also there, and she and Cecil struck up quite a flirtation, much to the disgust of Con Creighton, who had lately become deeply interested in her—to judge from appearances. The interest which a man will often take in a woman who, to an outsider, seems quite out of his line of taste, is quite extraordinary. Con was a man of large experience in the matter of good looks in women, and I was somewhat curious to know what he saw in Belle

which attracted him. Perhaps it was the slight atmosphere of the improper which surrounded her. She had not received a very careful bringing-up. Her mother was a jolly old body, and could tell you stories which were funny, but not strictly according to the dictates of propriety; and Belle, I judged, was not likely to grow prudish in such an atmosphere. Her father was too much taken up with his large drygoods business to have much time to devote to her education. Indeed, it was said that Mrs. Manly, when she married him, took his name in dead earnest, and held absolute rule. But society says many wrong things. I do not breathe a word against Belle, mind you, save that she was not so careful in her sayings and doings as she might have been.

However, she was very wealthy in her own right, and was a bright and much-talked-about girl, both because of her literary efforts and her behavior. As a consequence, she received much attention.

You may be sure we got up tableaux and private theatricals. I never stayed at a hotel in summer-time that someone did not organize something of the kind. However, it was very good sport planning them, as it was the means of organizing charming parties about the piazzas or in the cosy parlors, where we indulged in a large amount of laughter and talk, but accomplished little.

I will not occupy your time with any detailed description of the performance, as I fear it would tire you. In all accounts of society in summer which I have come across in the popular novels of our day, a chapter is always devoted to tableaux or amateur plays; but as the present performance is partially connected with after-events, I cannot avoid some mention of it.

Belle Manly was really a capital actress, and had taken

part in many plays. It was whispered about, every season, that she proposed going on the stage. Had she done so she would have found that her voice, which was well enough in a parlor, would have lacked volume to fill a large hall or theatre. Belle was largely instrumental in organizing and carrying out this entertainment.

I remember very well the evening of the performance. As usual, there had been little rehearsing, and the scene back of the stage was amusing in the extreme—the more so if you were not one of the performers. The whole of one end of the large dining-hall had been curtained off, and in the middle we had erected a small stage. On one side was a door, which by a back way led to the second story of the house. The space back of the curtain, on this side, served as a green-room, scene loft, and, in part, as a dressing-room.

As fast as the performers had arrayed themselves in their wonderful costumes, they came down into this green-room and entered into conversation with the others of the combination. They succeeded in raising a Babel of voices. The crowd beyond the curtain, however, being in the majority, created even a greater noise than that from behind the scenes.

Probably the most notable figure among the performers was Foster Perkins. At the last moment it was found that the "Roman Soldier" had been forgotten. They always have him in tableaux, and spell his name with capitals. Foster was inveigled into assuming the character. As no costume had been provided, I was compelled to arrange a sheet artistically about him, and fasten it in place with that greatest of all modern inventions, safety-pins.

Foster had a queer way of walking, as though he was stepping on eggs, and he held his elbows out in a sort of

deprecating manner. As he came into the green-room with this walk, arranged in the costume mentioned, it was no wonder that the rest of the performers sent up a shout.

"Do you know," said Foster, as he stopped by the side of Lou Stephens, "I feel like a great northern white sea-hawk on a fishing excursion. Ah! what?" and he smiled in that strange way which you could not comprehend.

"And what do *I* resemble to-night?" she queried.

"Oh! you are too sweet for expression," he answered; "I think I should liken you to a flamingo on toast."

I think perhaps the least attractive of all those taking part was a girl who bore the unaristocratic name of Sarah Kurtz. She was to impersonate Joan of Arc. Despite her name, she belonged to one of the families who traced their descent, both as to mother and father, directly from signers of that stronghold of American ancestry, the Declaration of Independence.

She was quite young—I fancy about twenty, and was an excessively plain girl. Tall and heavy-featured, with large nose, unpleasant-looking mouth, and heavy eyes; but worth at least half a million in her own right. She needed it all. But money is much—nay! almost everything in the eyes of most society men; and, as a consequence, Sarah was the recipient of much attention.

My relations with her had always been very pleasant, and I desired to maintain them. Who could tell what events might occur which would render the good wishes of a representative of five hundred thousand dollars of use to me?

Cecil Prescott and Belle Manly had become engaged in a deep flirtation while staying here, and she had arranged that he should take the part of her husband in the play that was to be given. Con Creighton, who, since the

breaking off of his engagement with the Boston girl, had confined himself chiefly to the actress whom I have spoken to you about, was again seeking fresh conquests in society. Usually he chose for his attentions a girl who was beautiful, and it was with some astonishment that I saw his devotion to Belle. He was certainly much interested in her, and the attentions of Prescott angered him. Con was to take no part in the performance, but he made his way behind the scenes and broke up a *tête-à-tête* in the corner between his rival and the object of his interest.

"I think I make a model husband, don't you?" I overheard Prescott saying, a moment before Con came up to them.

Con, after he had expressed to Belle his hopes for a successful performance, turned to Prescott and said:

"Well, Prescott, have you heard from your family at Richmond?"

The person thus questioned looked startled, for although his countenance did not change, yet his gray eyes had a look of suspicion in them. They never met your own in a direct way, and always reminded me of the visual organs of a rat.

"Oh, not yet," he drawled out, smiling, "but I shall have word in a day or two."

According to his account he drew several thousands a month as income from his large estates, and the remittances were made to him by his father from Richmond. He always stayed at the best hotels and was very particular as to his rooms; gave charming little suppers to his friends, and generally acted the part of a man of wealth and leisure.

Con, since the night of our adventure at the dance-hall, had treated Cecil with much disdain. He was a rather

heavy-minded fellow, was Con, but he was a thoroughly brave man, and Cecil's behavior had disgusted him.

Belle was capital as the charming and vivacious wife in the play, and Prescott performed the coddling business required in his part of the husband after a most approved method. Indeed, he was so thorough that I thought Con, who sat next to me in the audience, would be compelled to go out, he seemed so disgusted with his rival's proficiency.

Of all the tableaux I think the one in which Foster Perkins assumed his great rôle of the Roman Soldier, created the most uproarious demonstrations of applause. It was a sight which the audience was not likely to forget. He had been so many years in society, and his manner was so well known, that it was a treat to see him forced into a characterization quite outside of his personality, and so entirely unsuited to him.

"When the curtain rose I thought I was a great white stuffed owl at the State fair," he said, as he came down from the stage.

Agnes had been chosen to assume the part of "Adversity" in the tableau of that name. It was next to the last.

I had not seen her since the beginning of the evening. She had complained of a headache and had sought her room. I wished her to resign her part, but she would not do so, but assured me she would be ready when she was called. I had always considered Agnes a very beautiful girl, but when the curtain rose on her as "Adversity" my heart almost stood still, so lovely was the picture disclosed.

The background was of dark gray, and represented the wall of a house, against which she was leaning. Her basket of wayside flowers lay at her feet. She was clad in a

simple gown of dark brown, ragged and patched; one great tear showed her full, graceful neck and heaving bosom. She had been so tanned by the summer sun during her stay at the shore that she needed no artificial aid to heighten the effect, but, save that it was darkened, her skin shone pure and unblemished.

One arm was raised and bent above her head, and in her hand she clasped a bunch of violets; the other hand hung by her side. Her eyes were raised and directed somewhat across the stage, and on her face was a sweet look of resignation so true in its expression that the beholders were convinced that she was enduring the thought pictured there.

She was so evidently very young, and yet there was such a calm, reposeful quality about her beauty, that while the curtain was up the audience seemed fairly to hold its breath. When it descended there was the wildest applause; yet, as someone said, the picture was so innocent and pure that it was almost unseemly to clap one's hands over it.

I did not wait for the last tableau, but hurried round to the green-room to meet Agnes. She was quietly chatting with Charley Walton, always a great admirer of hers.

I seldom experience any great feeling of jealousy, but truly I hated that man for the moment. I could not find words to express myself to Agnes just then, but in a little while I said to her:

"Would you not like to take a turn on the porch—it is stifling here?"

It had been arranged that after the performance we were to have a dance, in which the actors were to participate without changing their costumes.

Agnes demurred at first to the stroll, as she wished to make some changes in her dress. Finally, however, she

concluded to remain as she was, only throwing a gauzy shawl about her shoulders.

We bowed to Charlie, who bit his mustache and scowled at me as we turned away, and then we strolled out on the piazza, which quite surrounded the inn.

We sat down on a convenient seat in one of those cosey corners no doubt especially designed for lovers.

"Agnes," I said, "I could not tell you in there what I thought of you in the tableau. I do not want you to think I am exaggerating, but, do you know, while the curtain was up I held my breath and my heart seemed to stop beating. The vision was so pure and beautiful it was profane to look upon it."

"And yet it is all yours," she replied, and her hand pressed mine.

"I thought of you and that night on the little island," I continued, "when I first told you of my love; even then, beautiful as you were in the moonlight, it was not so lovely as the picture of to-night."

"Does your love, Dick, increase with your admiration of my beauty?" she questioned, looking at me inquiringly.

For an answer I put my arms about her and drew her head down upon my shoulder. When I had kissed her I asked:

"Is not that an answer?"

"No; that is a song without words," she replied, demurely.

"Darling, it is easy to tell you of my love, but hard, I fear, to find words in which to express all I feel. You know how deep and true my affection is."

"And yet, Dick, I doubt sometimes that your life is all mine," she answered. "Men have so much to contend with and so many temptations and allurements."

"I know I am not worthy of you, Agnes, my love," I said, in deep, earnest tones; "we men do lead a hard life in some ways, and are not as good and true as you are. As I sat in there and saw you in that tableau—so pure, so true beyond expression, your whole nature showing forth from your clear eyes—I felt how utterly unworthy I am to hold such loveliness in my keeping," and, while I said it, I drew my arms a little more closely about her.

I will be frank with you and confess that I felt what I said at the time, but, in addition, I think that, as a matter of compliment, nothing pleases a girl more than this style of address, particularly if she loves you. She thinks she can charm you from your ways of evil, and better your life while she increases your love.

"Dick," Agnes said, finally, "I want you to promise me something."

"Well, what is it?" I asked. "Anything in the world I can do for you, I will."

"I want you to give up gaming and over-drinking and such other men's vices as it seems all men have."

"Why, who has been maligning me, darling?" I asked, laughing lightly. It was not well to encourage her in any detail on this subject. Glittering generalities were well enough and more poetical.

"Oh! no one," she answered; "but you know from what you yourself have told me that a society man's life is not always so pure as a girl's. Promise me, Dick, you will work hard at your profession and, when you are away from me, live a life from which you can come to me and not think I am too good for you. Women do not ask too much from men, but the man I wed I want to be a man in the true meaning of that word."

Agnes was growing more earnest than I had ever seen

her. She was a pure girl, and yet her society training had given her a knowledge of men and their ways which was somewhat embarrassing.

"Dick," she continued, as she put her arms about my neck and hid her face on my bosom, "you know I love you. I love you so deeply that unless some great change should occur, I cannot imagine life worth living without you. In some ways I cannot explain to myself why it is so, for I do not care usually for men or for their admiration. But when you look at me, or press my hand, or put your arm about me I know you are my fate. Promise me, then, for the sake of this love, that you will try in the future to live a life true to me and your own self-respect, and if the past has anything in it which you regret we will forget it."

What could I do but give her my promise. Surely such a woman was worth striving for. She could have persuaded a colder man than myself to promise much more than this. I swear that as I gazed down on this sweet girl's face, while I held her form in my arms and kissed her lips, I felt as if the greatest sacrifices were as nothing for the sake of keeping her love, and I vowed to her that I would in future lead a life worthy of her purity and beauty.

CHAPTER XII.

A MORAL RELAPSE.

"Sleep that knows not sleep."

MAN'S associations have more to do with his actions and success or failure in life than they are often given credit for, though of course their influence is acknowledged to a large extent. Certainly the surroundings of a man of the world are, for the most part, not calculated to advance him in progress—moral, mental, or physical.

The late hours at balls and other polite assemblages are wearing, even to a strong constitution, and render the participant in them unfit for his best work on the following day. But, more than this, the other dissipations which are a certain concomitant of fashionable life, and the habits of mind which they engender, do not have a tendency to spur men on to noble ambitions or healthy thoughts.

It is, "What time shall I meet you at the club?" "Come and take dinner with me at the Belleview, and we will visit

Donovan's afterward;" "What about a game of poker to-night at McGettigan's?" "Go to Mrs. Walton's to-night; she will have a real fiz supper—all the wine you want;" and so on. This is not once in a month, remember, but, during the winter season, day after day.

When a man once enters into this round of the social world there are but two things to be done: one is to leave it entirely; the other is to continue its gayeties with all vigor; there is no half-way method.

In these confessions I try to be quite frank with you, and I will say in regard to myself that at this time I was somewhat of a leader among the fashionable set of the social world, and I must acknowledge that I enjoyed my position immensely. I have a wonderful constitution, and seldom feel the effects of excesses as others do, and there is something about the excitement of the world of gayety which exactly suits me.

As may be supposed, it was quite impossible to follow the advice of my dear, pure little girl, Agnes. I took care that any actions of mine which might offend her did not come to her knowledge, but necessarily my amusements continued much the same as before our engagement. True, I was compelled to devote much of my time to her, and this somewhat curtailed them.

Time went on, and our betrothal was announced to the world.

You may be sure I was the recipient of many congratulations, which I bore modestly. I knew there were among the admirers of Agnes a number of sad hearts, whose owners would have been glad of an opportunity of murdering me in order to step into my shoes. I had reason certainly to congratulate myself on having won such a charming girl.

Late one afternoon, about two weeks after the announcement of our engagement, I stopped in at McGettigan's for dinner. I had been busy with some work at my office during the day, and had taken nothing save a light luncheon.

Soon after I had ordered a substantial dinner Ed Houghton came in, and I asked him to join me. After some slight demur he did so, and, as we were both hungry, we were occupied a considerable time over it. I was in no hurry, as Agnes had gone on a visit to her aunt, who lived out some distance in the country, and was not expected home until the following day. Ed was never in a hurry when dining, or indeed at any other time.

I ordered some wine, and we sat and chatted until it was going on toward nine o'clock.

"What are you going to do to-night, Dick?" Ed said, finally. "We should have a jolly good time somewhere, I think, as a sort of celebration of your recent happy alliance."

I laughed. I was indeed just in the humor for excitement of some kind. When a man is young and in good health there are times when the very excess of his spirits causes him to feel as though he would like to break things as a sort of vent to his superabundant strength. I was just in such a humor on that evening.

We had some discussion as to what we should do, but before we had settled on any plan of action we were saved from further labor by circumstances.

McGettigan's restaurant was situated in the heart of a fashionable district, and was a handsomely fitted up place, where they had one of the best cooks in the country. It was, as a consequence, much patronized by the men about town. So far as the women who frequented the place were

concerned, they were generally of that class whose first names were their usual titles in the mouths of all who knew them. The second-story dining-room, where we were at the time, was particularly a place for meetings with them.

While Ed and I were debating, Con Creighton came in with a girl on each arm.

Both of them were handsome women, and were quite well known among the men of our set.

One was tall and dark, with full, lithe figure and a face which was lit by kindly yet intensely piercing black eyes. She was called "Maude." The last name she used was "Coquette." What her true name was I never learned; but she was a girl of education, and she still retained a refined manner and a purity of speech not usual among her companions.

The other woman was somewhat of her opposite, being a true blonde. She was not attractive to me. She had a shapely but over-stout figure, but her face was soulless and unpleasant, her conversation loud, and her manners coarse.

The surname she had assumed at this time was that of one of the proudest families in the city. It is a custom among her class to adopt as their own both the first and last names of the members of the most distinguished families—a fashion always unpleasant to me. It was a saddening thing to hear, in the midst of a scene of dissipation, the name of one whom, primarily, you thought of as a proud and distinguished beauty, to whom homage was due for her purity.

Both Ed and myself knew the girls, and Con secured one of the rooms reserved for private parties, and we all entered. While Con and his companions had something to eat we sipped our wine and chatted together.

After a time I went out to get my cane, which I had left lying on the floor in the outer dining-room. I found there an extremely attractive girl whom I had named Félise, after one of Swinburne's heroines. She was rather petite, and had such a sweet, innocent face, and such an honest pair of eyes, that one not knowing her character would have been willing to avow his belief in her innocence.

I told her of the party in the next room, and she went in with me. We chatted and sipped our wine for perhaps an hour or more, and then it was proposed that we should go to an opium-joint and "hit the pipe," to use the vernacular.

It was Con who originated this plan, and as he had been there before, he volunteered to show us a place where we could enjoy a quiet smoke. Neither Ed nor myself, for a wonder, had ever before indulged. As a matter of fact, it was not then, nor is it now, a popular amusement among the dwellers in the world of society.

We engaged carriages and drove some distance, and at last came to a stop before a building the first floor of which was occupied as a liquor saloon of quite a commonplace character.

There was a double door-way to the side entrance. The northernmost led into the saloon, while the other barred the entrance to the object of our visit—the opium-joint. After Con had knocked in a peculiar way a horrible-looking cripple came to the door. After this Cerberus had been satisfied that we were straight, in some way I do not now recall, the whole party were admitted.

We mounted a steep and narrow stairway, dimly lit by a glimmering lamp at the head, and when we reached the second floor we found ourselves at the curtained entrance to the joint, which occupied the whole of that story of the building. We entered.

The rear of the place, which was fitted up as a public apartment, was arranged as a spacious but by no means elaborately furnished smoking-room.

Along the southern wall ran a shelf or divan, covered with cocoa matting, and upon this the smokers reclined, resting their heads upon the rough mats coiled along the wall. A few chairs, a stove, and a table for opium outfits completed the furniture, if we except the decorations on the walls, consisting of a few cheap prints and colored theatrical lithographs.

The front part of the second-story was separated by a partition from the rear, and was subdivided into private apartments, each fitted with a bunk or divan, a musty-looking rug, and a kerosene-lamp.

I was somewhat surprised at the poverty of the appointments, but Con assured me that this was one of the best joints in the city, and that in a few weeks it would be refurnished. The proprietor was not a Chinaman, though his assistants were. His name was Jack Boulston, and he had formerly been a well-known confidence man. He was tall and sallow-faced, with deep-sunken eyes and long, straight hair. He informed us that he did not use the drug himself; he preferred a pipe of old Virginia tobacco.

A number of men and women were reclining on the long divan in the public room. Some were smoking, others were already under the influence of the drug. The dim lamplight, falling on their pallid and for the most part depraved features, would have given me an unpleasant sensation at any other time, but now, somewhat exhilarated by the wine I had taken, with a jolly party bent on having a good time, the scene did not appear particularly disagreeable.

A party of New York society men, one of whom Con

knew, had been discussing the merits of this place as compared with one of their own resorts. Presently they dropped into conversation with some sunken-eyed, hollow-faced girls, who went by the names of "Sal," "Ju," and "Lil."

"No," said Sal, after a time, "I don't smoke often, only when I get a fit of the blues. About a month ago I got 'em, and then Lil she brought me here. I can take five or six now before it affects me."

"Five or six!" said Lil; "why, I can take ten or fifteen and think I own the world."

"Yes'n you'll wake up some day and diskiver all ye have got is a hole in the ground." Ju broke in.

Then they all started to sing in a subdued sort of a way. First it was "White Wings," and this was followed by "Only a Pansy Blossom." One of the New York boys was a smooth-faced young fellow who could not have been more than seventeen years old. He had a really beautiful voice, and sang "Only to see her Face Again" most charmingly, his comrades and the three girls coming in with the chorus.

Now and then, when they grew too loud, Jack would say —"Come, a little lower, please; you must not arouse the neighbors." The singers would then relapse into a subdued method, which was preferable to their *con moto* style.

At one time a policeman came in and suggested, in a modest sort of way, that perhaps we would not mind singing a trifle lower, and then went out in a soft, apologetic manner, smoking a cigar that Jack had given him.

We, of course, took a number of the private apartments. When we had arranged ourselves on the divans, the Chinese attendants produced little cups of "dope," as they called the opium, and from these weighed out a shellful for each person. Then the opium was formed into a pill on the end of a slender needle, called "youan hock," and

twirled deftly in the flame of the lamp, moulded into shape, and then neatly inserted into the bowl of the long pipe. As the smoker puffed, the opium sounded as if frying, and the noxious smoke came freely from the mouthpiece.

It took several pipes to place me under the influence of the drug. When I became unconscious, the sensations I experienced were by no means pleasant.

I dreamed that I was sinking down into a horrible, filthy quicksand, filled with toads, worms, and venomous reptiles of all kinds. Agnes, dressed as she was in the tableau of "Adversity," with that same strong light on her face, stood on a rock near by. Her countenance wore the same subdued look of that night. I held out my hand to her, and besought her to grasp it and save me from sinking, but she did not seem to hear me. I felt the filth about my waist, then at my arm-pits; now it was up to my chin. I tried to scream, but my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth. Agnes vanished. Deeper and deeper I sank, until I could feel I was suffocating in the mire.

At that moment I came to my senses. As I did so, I was conscious of a disturbance of some kind. As soon as I was sufficiently awake to know what was going on, I found that Félise had gone into hysterics while she had been smoking.

It was in vain they tried to quiet her. I do not know what visions the drug had conjured up in her mind; she would never afterward explain to me. Perhaps they were pleasant ones, of a happy home in days not so long gone by. Some dear mother's face may have come back to her as she lay under the influence of the drowsy drug.

In any case, when I awoke she was out of her mind, for the time at least. Her eyes glared with that look of vacuity which clearly showed the absence of reason.

"Take me home! Mother! mother! don't look at me like that! Yes, I'm coming back. Mother! mother! Take me home."

So she cried, and it was only when I had sufficiently recovered to put my arms about her and pacify her with sweet words that she quieted down. I got her into a carriage and took her to her room. When I saw her next day she was all right again, but she vowed she would indulge no more in opium-smoking. As for me, I went down to the Turkish bath and spent the rest of the night there. I know of nothing more refreshing, when overcome by dissipation, than a Turkish bath. I had, of course, often been in a condition when it was enjoyable, but now it was the only thing in life I cared to do. I had never before experienced such a beastly sense of oppression and such a feeling of utter wretchedness as after that adventure.

I have smoked opium since, several times, but I did not at any of the trials experience any very pleasurable sensations. I am of opinion that it is like tobacco, you must first become accustomed to its effects.

I slept until late the following morning, and then went down and enjoyed a plunge in the cool pool. I was somewhat heavy-headed during the rest of the day, but by evening I was myself again, and went to visit Agnes at the inn.

I have sometimes thought that about five or six o'clock in the evening of a day which follows a night of jollity, you feel better than at any other time; there comes on then a sort of reaction from the depression which first occurs. I found it so, indeed, even after my experience of "hitting the pipe."

CHAPTER XIII.

A WELL-BRED ADVENTURER.

"Is this that haughty, gallant, gay Lothario?"

AS the winter came on, and society took up the amusements of that season, I found myself, naturally, in a perfect whirl of gayety again, not only in the social world with Agnes, but, with my companions in dissipation, among other less choice enjoyments.

My relations with Agnes called on me to be with her at most of the balls and fashionable assemblies, and I found that these demands on my time were not always convenient. Mind, I do not wish you to imagine that she did not possess my love. I think what I have told you must have convinced you of that; but then there were times at which I needed to be with the fellows for a quiet game of

cards or other amusements, when the eternal dancing attendance was somewhat irksome. I wonder what lover has not said the same thing, if not to someone else, at least to himself?

It is not a source of much surprise, I think, that men of the world seek amusements with more character, if less innocence, than the balls and other social entertainments. You are aware that I do not claim any extraordinary intellect for many of our men, but even the average man is somewhat above the follies of the fashionable world.

The same round of people, night after night; the inane chatter which is the staple of ball-room conversations; the blare of the music; and the sameness of the usual surroundings of the world of society, grow very wearisome and monotonous after a few weeks have passed, and hence men look elsewhere for variety and sport.

It would prove quite as tiresome to you were I to tell of my many evenings passed in this round of society. One entertainment followed another, and they were, most of them, so much alike that it was difficult to distinguish them apart a day or two after they had passed.

I met all of those whom I have before mentioned to you as forming a portion of that circle who were called friends of mine, some of them holding the title by a very indefinite and slight tenure.

Little Jack Isaacs seemed to aspire to my vacant place in the heart of Ann Houghton. The story of our brief and secret engagement of marriage had never been given to the world by either party interested. Ann, you may be sure, did not wish anyone to know it. It is a matter of fact that, matrimonially considered, it is not a good thing for a girl to have her engagement broken off. It does not greatly affect matters which one is at fault; she is the

who usually suffers. I have known exceptions to the rule, but, speaking generally, when a girl becomes free after an episode of this kind, her chances, from a matrimonial point of view, are considerably less than before she entered into the contract. This was the reason for Ann's silence. As for myself, you remember the way in which my engagement to Agnes overlapped that to Ann. Had I given any hint of the prior compact, Agnes, besides pique at finding that she was not first, would not have comprehended the way in which I reckoned time; hence, you may be sure *I* held my peace.

I never liked Jack Isaacs. His way of lending money to men whom he wished to be his friends, but who were really only acquaintances, was "caddish" and not becoming a gentleman. Besides this, I have a natural antipathy to some people, quite as strong as the affinity I feel toward others; and there was an unexplainable something about him which was excessively disagreeable to me, and would have existed even had I not known of his failings.

I determined that he should have no easy task to win Ann, if I could in any way influence her. I have always found that, with a girl with whom you may have had tender scenes which time has dimmed in your sight though not in hers, it is far wiser to be brave and forward than to attempt to evade meeting her, or to avoid speaking to her on the subject. Women often love to distraction a brave villain, but they usually hate a man who pretends to forget, and who makes believe there was nothing in the love of days gone by. Not that she will not try those tactics herself; but she does not wish him to use the same.

I think Ann at first would have tried the policy of ignoring me, had I allowed her to do so. But you will recognize the difficulty of enforcing it when the offender rushes up

to her in a room full of people who know them only as friends, and leaning down over her chair, says:

"Why, how are you, Miss Houghton? I am awfully glad to see you back again. Did you enjoy a pleasant summer? Where were you? Oh, yes, I remember, at Lake George. Who was there?" and so on.

How can she refuse to speak to him, when Jack Isaacs is sitting by her side, and will certainly suspect something wrong if she does not reply in a manner as much like that of old as she can make it with that feeling of pique or pain at her heart.

There are, indeed, some uses for society when it enables us to accomplish things of this kind. After a time Ann and I seemed to be growing quite friends once more. I came into contact with her so often at the various entertainments that it was in vain for her to seek escape; and the ice once broken, to continue our friendly relations was no difficult task.

Even though I was engaged to another woman, I could see that this girl loved me still. No one could exert the influence over her that I could. Her hand trembled in mine sometimes when I secured an opportunity of taking it in greeting or parting, and when I went back to old days in my conversations I could trace her emotion in her pure eyes.

Still you must not conclude that Jack was without chances, now that I was actually engaged to Agnes. Constant dropping will wear away stone, and an average woman's heart is by no means to be likened to that substance. Jack was certainly on hand when he was wanted, and he knew just enough about Ann's liking for himself to have an idea of the way to conduct his campaign. If a girl cannot have a husband who will be her lover, she will

accept, as the next best, one who will act as her servant. This was where Jack's stronghold lay. I understood this, and took opportunities of hinting to Ann of my sorrow at our broken engagement, and how in pique men will sometimes do things they afterward regret.

I do not fancy that I cared any more for Ann at this time than before. There was no risk in the pursuit now, however, and there was truly something winning about the girl which always followed me. Perhaps I considered that she needed some punishment for her breaking off of our engagement, though, as you know, it was a lucky thing for me that matters happened as they did.

Alice Carlton was prominent in society during this winter, and was much sought after by the hostesses. She was an exceedingly popular girl with the men, and received from them more attention than she really cared for, I fancy.

Tom Dickson was still very attentive to her. He was not everywhere with her, it is true, but at the same time, in a quiet way, he kept up an intimate friendship with her. He was working hard at his profession, and had achieved some considerable success as the counsel for a man accused of murder. His client was convicted, but Tom acquired not a little notoriety and fame from his conduct of the case. The speech which he made, in which he pleaded for an acquittal of his client on the ground of insanity, was an able effort, I am told.

He and I always kept up a certain friendship for each other, although he was not in the fast set in which I moved to so large an extent, and was not often seen in society. Now and then a more prominent entertainment than usual would call him from his retirement, but his practice and outside study seemed to occupy most of his time.

Occasionally he would drop into my office for a chat,

and when he found a favorable opportunity he would use his efforts to persuade me to devote myself to my profession.

"Dick," he said, "you know you have a good head for logical thought, and that you are a speaker of some worth; you would make a capital lawyer if you would qualify yourself. Then, too, you have a retentive memory. See how much knowledge of the law you acquired in a few weeks before your examination."

"And forgot almost immediately afterward," I interrupted.

"Give up your present way of living—all your nights at balls and parties and in other dissipations, and then bracing up in the morning on brandy-and-soda, and believing you can do good work."

"What's the use, Tom," I replied. "My father says he has enough money to supply both, and when he dies he will leave it all to me. Why should I labor more than I do? 'As adown Life's stream I glide, touch me gently, gently, Time,'" I quoted, laughing.

Then Tom would expostulate and reason with me, and tell me that a man should never gauge the value of his existence by the amount of money he has to spend. He was a clever fellow, was Tom, and I did not mind him, though from anyone else I should have taken such advice with very bad grace. He was a gentleman all over, and whatever he did was with a tact which almost made it pleasant, even when he gave good advice—usually tiresome.

I have told you about Mr. Cecil Prescott and his flirtation with Miss Manly; also of Con Creighton's hate of him.

Con called me aside, one evening at Mrs. Williamson's ball, and said he wished me to do him a favor.

"Do you see that," he said, indicating a corner where Belle Manly and Cecil Prescott were sitting, evidently totally absorbed in each other. "That man has evidently a very winning way with him, for I have heard it rumored that he is actually engaged to Belle. Certainly their actions indicate it."

"Well, Con," I said, "you don't want me to interfere and break it off, do you?"

"I tell you what I wish you would do," he answered; "take an opportunity of telling her that you have it on excellent authority that this fellow she is reported as engaged to is an adventurer."

"Well," I queried, as he paused, "what then? She will hate me for my information, even if I could prove it true, which I fear I could not do. What have you learned that gives you the right to say what you have?"

"Why, as a matter of fact, I have no very definite information, but I know enough to see what I say must be true, and I shall know more very soon. For myself, I am tied by my attentions to her; I cannot tell her directly anything derogatory to his character, and even my hints are taken as the outcome of lover's jealousy. If I did more I should be hated. But you are her dear friend, and it would have more force coming from you."

I promised, of course, to see what I could do to help him as soon as I could secure a favorable opportunity; but I vowed in my heart that I would take care that no such opportunity presented itself if I could get out of its way.

As the Fates would have it, however, I was compelled to use my efforts in Con's behalf, for later on that same evening I was by accident thrown with Belle Manly for a few moments, and she said:

"*I* want to have a little talk with you. Come out on the

stairs a few minutes. Dick," she said, as soon as we were seated in a confidential corner, "you are a good friend of mine, I fancy, and I want to ask you what you know of Cecil Prescott."

Under the circumstances I could see no reason for concealing my feelings. She should not take offence at an answer she had sought.

"Is your intent serious?" I queried.

"Oh! no, not at all," she hastened to answer, "but you know how particular mamma and myself are about our friends." (I am sorry to say I had never been made acquainted with that fact before.) "I want to know what you really have heard concerning him. Mr. Creighton sometimes hints bad things about him."

"Well, Belle," I replied, "I have it from reliable authority that Cecil Prescott is an adventurer. I really know nothing definite, and yet had I a sister who was thinking of engaging herself to him, I should certainly not let her do so with my approval. They do say that he is married already."

About a week later her engagement to Mr. Cecil Prescott was formally announced.

That is the way with women. From a moral point of view they certainly are purer than men, and I shall always have a word to say about the lovableness of their character generally. When, however, it comes to the exercise of judgment, they are often found sadly lacking.

Belle, in this instance, paid dearly for her temerity.

I could not understand what it was she saw in Prescott which attracted her. The restless eyes and the sort of fugitive air which hung about him, as if he were in momentary expectation of the grasp of an officer of the law, was of itself enough to have disgusted almost anyone, you would

have thought. Yet this young man, without any recommendation save his acquaintance with Ed Houghton, was admitted everywhere, even into our sacred assemblies, and the younger girls almost devoured him. Now, to crown all, he was engaged to be married to a wealthy and well-known society girl who really knew nothing of him save what he had told her, and who had been warned against him by her friends. To be sure, Prescott had, to a large extent, the manners of a gentleman, and he lived a life of ease, and, apparently, was wealthy.

I think I did neglect to say that Prescott had letters of introduction from a number of well-known Southern families. But it was not well to place too much reliance on these, as it is a strange fact that no one is too bad to secure letters of introduction. Many people in the world are rather pleased than otherwise to give their black-leg relatives letters, by which they are enabled to prey on the outside communities. It is a sort of instinct of self-preservation which prompts the act, I imagine.

Con was somewhat depressed by the news of their engagement—as much, at least, as a society man can be. He plunged deeper into the dissipations of life, and this is usually a sign of a broken heart. Let us drown sorrow in the wild river of pleasure and riot! There is really some solid comfort in this method of sorrowing. I do not think that Con would have married Belle if he had had the chance. He was merely interested in her for the time.

I told him I had done all I could for him, and related what had taken place.

"Well," I said, "never mind, Con; your time will come. If the man is what you say he is, he will be found out."

One afternoon, soon after this, I stopped in at the hotel where Ed Houghton was then staying—his family being

absent in Europe. Prescott and he had become quite near friends, and the former lived here in the most elegant fashion. He had a suite of luxurious rooms, and maintained things in a style becoming a man whose income was twelve thousand per annum. He insisted on every attention from the people about the hotel, and was generally looked upon as a responsible man.

As Ed and I sat chatting together, Prescott came in, evidently in a state of great excitement.

"Ed," he said, "I am very much annoyed by the behavior of these people at the hotel. You know I am going with Belle Manly and her mother to spend a week in New York, and, can you believe it, these beasts here will not let me move my things, but say they will hold them as collateral until my bill is paid. I expect some four or five thousand dollars from my father on Monday, but they actually have the impudence to refuse to let me move my traps. I wish you would go down and arrange it with them. Of course, I will make it all right with you."

There was such an appearance of honesty about him as he said this, and he spoke in such earnest tones, with just the force of manner of a man of gentle feelings who had been placed by unfortunate circumstances in an unpleasant situation, that our sympathy was aroused at once. I do not know that I ever felt so clearly the gentlemanly character of the man as at this moment, when fate was at his heels.

We went down with him at once to interview the proprietor. We questioned him as to what the trouble was, and how it was that he ventured to hold a gentleman's baggage as security.

The proprietor and his clerk took us into the private office, while Prescott was requested to remain outside. The clerk of the hotel was a man of iron cheek and some con-

siderable discernment, I fancy. He had clear, piercing eyes, which seemed to look through you, and was a true American hotel-clerk, though his brains had made him the virtual head of one of the best caravansaries in the country.

"We can cut this discussion short," he said. "Read that;" and he handed me a slip of newspaper-cutting. "The facts detailed in that article are, we believe, true, and therefore we retain Mr. Prescott's baggage for his board-bill of $193. If on reading that you are desirous of settling the matter, give us $175, and we will give you a receipt in full. You can then collect the whole amount from Prescott."

I glanced at the article which he had handed me. It was the relation of the career of a successful society swindler.

He was a young man of gentlemanly appearance and manners, and was well connected with families in Virginia. His father had left him a large fortune. This he soon dissipated in riotous living, and when it was gone he took to living by his wits. At Saratoga, one summer, he had lived a gay life with the crowd of fashion. He entered the hotel there with no less than six trunks, but left it with a gripsack, and without notifying the proprietor of his departure or arranging for a settlement of a trifle of eight hundred dollars for board and extras. When his trunks were opened after his departure, they were found to contain bricks and other trash of no value at all. In addition he had, on the day of his departure, induced the proprietor to cash a worthless check for $100, his wealthy companions giving him a standing which enabled him to get so much credit.

From Saratoga he had turned to the metropolis. Both at the Fifth Avenue and Brunswick hotels he had lived in *style.* He had ordered and received credit from several

firms for jewelry, clothing, etc., and had been introduced at several prominent clubs. He had had a glorions time until his new-found creditors in their importunity caused him to seek new scenes.

This young man was our friend, Cecil Prescott.

The article said, by way of conclusion, that he was in the habit of becoming engaged to some charming girl in each city in which he sojourned for any length of time, but it was reported that he had a wife and family in New Orleans, whom he had deserted.

Ed and I had read the account together.

"In addition to that account," said the eagle-eyed clerk, "I may tell you that this young man has actually borrowed money from the servants about this house."

"This may all be a mistake," I said to Ed; "but if I were in your place I should not go security for Prescott."

"I won't," he answered; "I'll tell him I will see about it."

We returned to the hallway. I think Prescott must have thought from our looks that our conclusion was against him, for he said, almost instantly:

"I think I will not trouble you, Ed. It is a deuce of an unpleasant thing, but I will put up my diamond ring as security," and taking a very handsome diamond ring from his finger he passed it to the clerk, saying: "Just give me a receipt for this, will you?"

It was certainly a beautiful stone, and the clerk was quite willing to accept it as security. He told the porters to see that Mr. Prescott's baggage was delivered.

After the account which I had just read I was somewhat astonished to see Prescott give up such a valuable as this for his baggage, which was presumably not worth much. I believe the proprietor had taken possession of his travelling

valise, and I suspect that this contained papers and documents of much value to him. Had they been captured and read by the police authorities they would perhaps in some way have destroyed all his chances in the future.

"It will be a jolly lark now if Belle and her mother go to New York with him, and then this all comes out," Ed said. "How would it do to give the old lady a pointer?"

"No; you will only get yourself into trouble," I said. "I told Belle that the man was a fraud before she engaged herself to him, and I received nothing but ill-will for my pains."

The party did not go to New York, however, for Mrs. Manly was taken ill, and the visit was postponed for a day or two, Prescott meanwhile taking up his residence with them.

Two days afterward the daily papers contained an *exposé* of Prescott, giving the facts I have related and some others besides. For several weeks he was the talk of the town.

I cannot say what sort of a time he had with his *fiancée* and would-be mother-in-law when the news came to their ears. I have understood that he tried to brazen it out at first. It appears that the old lady, in addition to the newspapers' story, had received a letter from one of Prescott's relations at the South, corroborating the newspaper account. Together they were more than he was able to combat, and he was turned out.

I felt convinced that this man's talent lay in that line of life which he had adopted. He was a smooth-spoken swindler, and never appeared to such advantage as when playing that rôle. We cannot say his life was altogether a mistake, looking at it philosophically, since he made use of his talents in a line to which they were peculiarly adapted.

I believe that at this time his resources were at a very low ebb, for about three days after his downfall I received a note from him by the hands of a District messenger boy. It ran thus:

"DEAR MR. CONWAY: Explanations are not worth while under the present state of things. The actual facts are, that I want to leave this city at once. Five dollars will enable me to do it. You are a man of the world and will be liberal in your judgment, and will not let it prevent you loaning me this sum. I will repay it, as soon as I receive funds, on my honor as a gentleman."

I sent him five dollars. It was worth that sum to be rid of him. Besides I wanted to see what his honor as a gentleman was worth.

I never saw either Prescott or my five dollars again. I fear he sheltered his conscience under that clause of his letter, "I will repay it as soon as I receive funds." I heard of him afterward in a Western city carrying on the same deceitful course. It must have been a very exciting kind of life.

I did not mention, I think, that the ring which he had deposited as security for his board was one which he had taken out of the largest jewelry store in town while in Mrs. Manly's company, and which he had had charged to her while she was examining some other jewelry.

He told her afterward that he had sent to New York for it, and that it was Belle's engagement ring. Mrs. Manly was compelled to satisfy his board-bill in order to get it back. She tried, of course, to hush the whole matter up as soon as possible; but it was a staple topic of conversation in the social world for many weeks following. So un-

pleasant did it appear to Belle and her mother that they started on quite an extended tour abroad.

It would have been wiser for Belle had she listened to my advice more seriously and followed it.

I felt certain that in the course of a year or two she would return and make her appearance in society as a *débutante.*

CHAPTER XIV.

METROPOLITAN PLEASURES.

"The primrose path of dalliance tread."

SOME time, early in the new year, I spent about a week in New York, and while nothing of great moment occurred during my stay, yet I think you may be interested in hearing how the world of fashion there compares with that elsewhere.

So far as I can see it is rather more reckless, extravagant, and vicious. Money is everything, and the moral standard is dependent upon it to a large degree. In Philadelphia a young man should have connections rather than means, if he wishes society to overlook his social failings; in the metropolis, however, he should have money in order that they

ignore his faults. There is no particular necessity for him to have a grandmother. Given the requirements mentioned, each in its appropriate city, and there is not such a wide difference in the treatment of society, though, taking it all around, there is less rigor in the latter. Club life is such a vast factor in this respect there, that there are few men who do not belong to several clubs ; and among married men, in particular, I think there is more looseness of behavior.

Just about the time of my visit to New York, Agnes and her mother had arranged for a visit to Fortress Monroe; but I pleaded business as an excuse, and so it was not arranged that I should accompany them. Two days after their departure Roland Randall dropped in to see me.

"Dick, ole fell," he said, "I have an invitation from Charlie Van Wasson to come over and spend a week with him, and he includes you in the letter. Will you go? You had better come," he added, as I appeared undecided. "We shall have one of the grandest times you ever took part in. They are not slow over there in their amusements, and Charlie will show us the town in all its variety."

The temptation was too great.

"I will go," I said. "When do we start?"

"To-morrow afternoon, by the limited express," he answered.

I had several matters of business which required looking after during the coming week, but I turned these over to Tom Dickson. A few days' absence on my part did not matter; I could make it up some other time. I presumed Agnes would require an explanation of my reasons for being unable to come down for a few days to Fortress Monroe, and yet finding time to spend a week in New York ; but I trusted to chance to save me in this matter as she had done in many other difficulties.

The next day found us in New York.

We were cordially received by Charlie Van Wasson, and he promised to see that we enjoyed ourselves. So far as Roland was concerned he was quite sure of this, for he was still devoted to Ethel Van Wasson, and would have unlimited opportunity for showing it under the present circumstances. I was quite confident of my ability to find amusement also, even if there should be no one in particular among the feminine portion of the social world to whom I could attach myself.

Through Charlie we were admitted to a number of the best clubs, and had an opportunity to observe that phase of life in detail.

The wealth of New York naturally causes some odd excrescences to sprout on the great tree of society. A notable one, which you may have heard of, greatly interested me at first.

As Roland, Charlie, Alex De Haven and myself were dining one day at one of the prominent clubs, a man who was expensively, though somewhat over, dressed, came in. At Charlie's invitation he seated himself at our table, but before doing so he bowed to us in a formal manner, when he was introduced as Mr. Walter Herries.

He soon took the lead in the conversation, and spoke freely of the theatres, the actresses, the various club scandals, and a vast variety of congenial topics.

"Gentlemen," he said, at last, "you must drink with me now," and he called for an old and well-established brand of champagne, giving careful directions as to the icing and serving of it.

When it was poured out, he cried, "Champagne to our real friends and real pain to our sham ones; clean glasses and old corks."

No sooner had he tasted the wine, however, than he coughed as if in a fit, and dashed his glass on to the floor. A number of men strolled up to see what the disturbance was about.

"It's all that beastly wine," Mr. Herries said, after he had composed himself. "I have made up my mind several times to order no more. I shall not forget it soon again. Take this away," he said to the waiter, "and bring me some ——" and he named a new brand of wine lately introduced into the market.

"That old brand of wine has deteriorated sadly of late years. I remember when it was the best and I could use no other; now it is very bad."

The other wine was brought, but I must say I preferred the first offered.

Presently Mr. Herries pleaded an engagement and departed. I then questioned Charlie as to what it all meant.

"You must know," he answered, "that Walter was not long since a very wealthy young man. He was a swell in the world of fashion, and was known as an authority on dress, jewelry, and kindred topics, and was an excellent judge of all kinds of liquors. He soon ran through his fortune, and was for a time way down. It was not long before he took on somewhat of his old style. He has now every article of adornment you can imagine, and dresses in the most expensive manner, has every novelty as soon as it comes out, and lives a life of ease. He spends his time at the clubs and places of amusement during the winter-time, and in summer you will see him at the fashionable resorts."

"Where does he get the funds?" I asked.

"They are the result of just such doings as we saw a few moments ago," Charlie answered. "He advertises

that new brand of champagne which he called for in that way. The company which employs him pays all the expenses and a good salary besides. In addition to this, he receives a considerable sum from a prominent tailor, in return for which all he does is to wear his make of clothes and praise his work. Now and then he will take an odd job, such as pushing a special brand of cigarettes or tobacco. By these means he reaps quite a large income, and at the same time preserves his reputation for fashion. He has a most congenial existence, and you would find him a very pleasant companion if you could see more of him. His business, of course, requires him to cultivate the polite world, for upon his popularity there depends the success of his advertising."

I had an opportunity of meeting Walter Herries again while in New York, and found him a very attractive fellow and a thorough gentleman. His was truly not such an ignoble calling, when you consider it seriously. It was a position requiring tact, good judgment, and a thorough knowledge of the weaknesses of human nature.

Through the Van Wassons we received invitations from the most exclusive circles, and I had ample opportunity for observing the condition of the world of society.

There is something about most of the society girls of New York which is simply charming. In our own city, the girls seem to take a tone from the Quaker element there, and they do not possess that dash and vivacity which is one of the chief characteristics of their metropolitan sisters. The latter have a way of wearing their gowns, or trimming their hats, or of walking, which enables an observer to identify them at once. In many of them, I am bound to say, it is the result of affectation, and it palls on one after a time.

If you are bent on enjoyment while on a visit, it is wise, I think, to attach yourself to one girl in particular, and devote your attentions to her.

There was a very dear friend of Ethel Van Wasson in whom I became deeply interested during my stay. Her name was Viola Hazelton. She was tall and dark, and with that dashing manner which I have spoken of. Her figure was graceful, though rather full in its outlines, while her face was almost classical in its contour. The lines of her mouth betokened firmness and decision. But, above all, it was her eyes which attracted me. I do not know when I have met any such—they were so fascinating. They were veiled by long, languorous, dark lashes, and even her lids were so dark about their edges that one could almost have vowed they were pencilled; but they were not. The eyes themselves were large, black, and scintillant, and when they looked full into my own, I felt as though all the world was contained in them, and any sacrifice worthy which they urged.

I had an opportunity of seeing her every day, and I paid her devoted attention, and spoke of my love for her in a free fashion which she encouraged and seemed mightily to enjoy.

Two days before our stay came to a close the Van Wassons gave a large ball, and you may be sure Viola was to take a prominent part in it. Roland and I anticipated a royal time, although, as you may imagine, we were blasé with such affairs at this time. I confess I was growing weary of the constant dissipation which we had indulged in since our arrival. Several nights we had not put in an appearance at the Van Wassons'. Alex De Haven, Charlie Van Wasson, Roland, and myself had spent most of our evenings together, and the two first-named were quite

familiar with the ins and outs of fast life, and they certainly did not leave us in ignorance of the pleasures of their city.

Several mornings we found ourselves on awaking in De Haven's rooms. He had a splendid suite of apartments on Fifth Avenue, and lived like a prince, with a number of servants and every requirement necessary to sober up on after a night of dissipation. He was an open-handed fellow, and it was a true pleasure to partake of his hospitality. He was a most extraordinary drinker. I have never seen anyone who could compete with him ; and in endeavoring to follow his lead we found that our constitutions, thorough-bred as they were, would not take the course mapped out. The result was that we urged them and found ourselves landed in the ditch, to use a horsy simile. Alex was good enough to see always that we were taken good care of.

It was not until two o'clock of the afternoon preceding the Van Wassons' ball that we were able to get ourselves into condition to go down and have some breakfast, or luncheon, as we might call it. By ten o'clock that evening, however, under the influence of a light stimulant and a good dinner, we were able to look forward to the ball with some anticipation of pleasure.

I have before said that one ball is much like another, and is so irrespective of the city in which it may be given. Perhaps there may be a finer display of diamonds and jewelry, and the affair as a whole be a trifle grander in New York than in Philadelphia ; but saving this, the atmosphere of the entertainment is much the same in one place as in another. Human nature being also much alike everywhere, the topics of the ball-room do not vary to any great extent.

Besides the large rooms which the house contained, the

Van Wassons had erected a temporary ballroom over a portion of the garden, which extended in the rear of the parlor. This had been decorated by masses of exotic plants in the corners, and led out into the conservatory, which was very large. Many pleasant spots had been arranged in which loving hearts could find that shelter so much desired for love-making.

I happened for a moment to be alone there, at about 2 A.M., and was joined by Roland Randall.

"Come with me to the smoking-room," he said, and we strolled there together.

"Dick," he said, after we had lighted our cigarettes, "I have gone and done it."

"Done what?" I asked.

"Proposed to Ethel Van Wasson," he replied.

"And you have been——"

"Accepted," he broke in. "Congratulate me, will you not?"

"Why, by George, of course I will, old man, with all my heart," I cried, grasping him by the hand. "But I did not know you were a marrying man. Are you really in earnest in the matter?"

His face took on a curious, doubtful look as I said this. It appeared he had not thought of this aspect of the case.

"Why, I suppose so. You see, it was all due to that conservatory," he said, finally. "I went in there for a quiet talk with Ethel, and we seated ourselves in that cosey seat under that sweet-scented bush in the far corner."

"No wonder you were taken in," I said, as he paused.

"Well, her hand hung down by her side in such a tempting way that I could not resist the impulse to take it in mine. Once having it there, she did not make any serious effort to loosen my hold. I had taken two or three drinks,

you know, and was in a desperate mood. Of course, Dick, you are a man who knows the desire one feels to make love under such circumstances, and I got so wound up and so earnest that I found myself saying a great many sweet things, asking her the most serious questions, and receiving answers of like character. The end was—head on my shoulder, kisses, and requests for me to see her parents. This I must do to-morrow—or to-day, rather."

"It's a pretty serious case," I said, as he paused in his narration, "but I think you may as well stick to your flag now. You have really got a prize; and while, as I say, I do not look upon you as a marrying man, yet, if you are in the mood for it—why, you cannot do better."

"Yes, I suppose so," he answered.

"There is one thing you may take into consideration also," I said: "If you, at any time before you are married, feel like withdrawing from the compact, why, it will not be so difficult. A non-resident sweetheart is a much lighter responsibility than a domestic one. You do not have to see her more than once a week, save when she makes an occasional visit to her to-be relations. When the inclination comes to break with her, why, the distance is always an element in your favor."

"There is a good deal of truth in that, no doubt," said Roland, thoughtfully. "I may call on you for aid in case I am stuck."

We passed out and into the ballroom.

I found I was just in time for the waltz which I had engaged with Miss Hazelton.

She was a perfect dancer, and had that long, swinging glide which alone makes dancing enjoyable for itself. What amusement can be more delightful than this when you have a congenial partner? If the music is good, and

there is ample space, there is indeed nothing left to be desired.

On you go in the soft, dreamy time of the music, clasping closely in your arms the form of the woman who is your world—for the time at least. Now and then, as you pause or turn, her soft hair touches your cheek, and from the flowers at her bosom comes a languorous odor, like that of the lotos-flower. What trouble can follow you at such a time? Sombre care flees from the gay scene; remorse turns away sullenly and hides in some corner. I am convinced that there are few more innocent amusements. I have heard men criticise the manner in which girls dress at balls, but usually their thoughts during such entertainments are more innocent than at any other time. The physical exercise of dancing, and the constant attention and skill necessary to avoid collisions in crowded assemblages, are of themselves sufficient to occupy the attention of the dancer; and all the evil which has been spoken of in connection with the amusement is quite imaginary.

I was well accustomed to such scenes as the present, and found no difficulty in piloting my way through the maze of dancers. We danced long, and enjoyed it much, and when at last we ceased we were both very warm and fatigued.

I procured Viola a glass of claret-punch, and we strolled out into the conservatory. Fortunately I found empty the identical seat on which Roland had declared his passion. We took our place there.

Viola was looking beautiful to-night, her black gown setting off to great advantage her snowy neck and arms, the delicate embroidery here and there accentuating the folds.

There is something about black which is excessively becoming to certain women. With dark, distinguished-looking girls, such as my partner of that evening, it is my favor-

ite style of dress. The heavy coils of her black hair were worn high on her head, and in their midst shone the diamonded hilt of a dagger. Her small and delicately moulded feet were clad in black-satin slippers, embroidered slightly at the toe, and clasped by buckles, on which the precious stones also glittered.

The seat which we had chosen was indeed a lovers' corner, and I did not wonder now that the surroundings had had such an influence on Roland's feelings. We were quite hidden by shrubbery and tropical plants from all save those who sought the spot out; but evidently there were a considerable number who were interested in such a hiding-place, for several times we were intruded upon by couples who seemed waiting their turn for the position. In fact, Ethel Van Wasson told me, afterward, that the spot was responsible for five or six engagements on that evening alone.

There was, I thought, a mutual attraction between Viola and myself; somewhat of that curious, indefinable sensation of nearness of soul of which I have more than once spoken. We had reached in our attachment the earnest stage, and Viola was a girl amply able to understand the deeper side of a friendship. She had a direct, serious way of looking at me—so frank and true a gaze that it touched my heart. Somehow to-night we seemed nearer in spirit than ever before, and we fell at once into a serious sort of conversation.

"Do you know," I said, at last, "I feel as if you and I had been friends for a much longer time than a week."

"Do you?" she queried, smiling. "We are certainly good and true friends, are we not?"

"It seems," I went on, in an earnest manner, "as if we had met before, somewhere. I know I never saw you in this world until I came to New York a few days since; and

yet when you turn your head and smile at me in that way I could almost swear I had. Could it have been in some other world in which we existed in time gone by? Perhaps the test of true love here is the fact that we have met and been friends in some other world—some beautiful land beyond the twinkling stars."

"That is a very sweet idea," Viola said, softly.

"I remember some verses which bear on the thought," I continued. "I do not know by whom they were written:

"'There was some other life, I know, somewhere,
For we were dear, dear friends on that first day;
We met within this world of work and care;
Your heart renewed old love with all its sway.
Shall we again know life that nothing mars,
In some fair home beyond the twinkling stars?'"

"It is charming," Viola said. "I suppose there are very few of us who have not experienced the sensation in a greater or less degree, if not as to people, yet as to events; something is said or done which we are certain has occurred before."

She changed the subject slightly as she said:

"Do you know, I shall be awfully sorry to have you leave New York. We have had so many pleasant conversations together on subjects somewhat out of the ordinary run of society talk. You are a very interesting man to talk to. You are heartless, and a thorough man of the world, and yet you have a mind which can lend itself to a higher line of thought."

"You are very good to say so," I said, seriously. "I wish I could find words to tell you how much I have enjoyed my visit here—because of you. If you could know how I hate to go back to business you would pity me."

"But it is not so far from here to your own city," she said. "You can come over often and see me; I shall always be at home to you."

She looked me full in the face as she said it. I never saw a more winsome, fascinating glance. It was full of that mixture of dainty modesty and entreaty which is likely to overtake a modest woman when she wants a man to make a serious declaration to her, and yet fears it.

I was very deeply influenced by the feelings of the passing moment.

I grasped one of her hands in my own. It was slender and long, and yet soft and full; and it lay nestled in my own as lightly as a caged dove. There is such a wide difference in hands, not alone in their appearance, or because of a variance of the life-lines and other marks, but in the feeling. I dislike extremely a long bunch of flabby fingers, or a bony hand, even when it is well-proportioned. A small, chubby hand I am fond of; but better than all is a soft, firm, warm, well-shaped hand like that of Viola's.

"Do you mean what you say, Miss Hazelton—Viola?" I asked, and I pressed her hand and moved nearer to her. "You may be certain I shall come. You hold all my happiness in your keeping. Do you know, I have loved you madly since the first day I met you—not in the frivolous manner of the life in which I live, but with the affection of a strong, true man."

I was very much in earnest, and as I spoke my lips approached dangerously near her own. She coyly withdrew her head, but did not take away her hand.

"No doubt you think I am only a trifler; but, I assure you, I am in earnest now. If I thought I could hope for your love my whole life would be devoted to your happiness."

Suddenly she drew her hand away as she said, sharply:

"And how about the happiness of Miss Moore?"

It flashed through my mind in an instant that she knew all from Ethel, who of course was informed by Roland. She had been playing with me.

"Why, you did not think I was in earnest, did you?" I said, laughing. "I was not playing with you for keeps."

"You were in earnest—as much as you ever can be," Viola said. "I don't mind your making love to me, Dick, but, if I were you, I would not commit that disrespect to the absent one which you do when you behave as you did just now. You have good qualities—enough to make you an admirable man: don't misuse them. Let us go in."

The following evening was to be our last in New York, and we determined to spend it in a way suitable to the occasion. During the early part of it we were all occupied with various social matters incident to our stay, but at twelve o'clock we met at Alex's rooms, and from there proceeded to the great French ball which was being held at Madison Square Garden.

It was about one o'clock when we entered the doors of the huge building, and the real fun was just beginning. Rows of chairs and boxes extended from the eaves down to the floor, after the style of an amphitheatre. The floor-space for dancing was enormous, and thousands of couples might have enjoyed it provided they kept sober.

I had often been to masquerade balls before. Most of those which are gotten up to attract the fashionable and the depraved elements at one and the same time are not one-tenth as bad as they are represented. They are advertised, in one way or another, as being very wicked. This is for the purpose of drawing the callow college students,

store clerks, and youthful society men, who think they are leading a "real fast life" if they can stand among a crowd of their companions on the outside of a large dance-floor and watch a few dyspeptic masqueraders, clad in costumes not in the least improper, dance in a manner not at all out-of-the-way, through the mazy quadrille.

If any one of these slim boys standing gaping at the show succeeds in inducing a festive mask of the opposite sex to drink with him a glass of the vile champagne which is farmed out at such places, he feels in his heart that he has at last become one of the boys.

So far as the dressing is concerned on the part of the women, it is seldom as remarkable as that at our fashionable assemblies—a fact I think I remarked in relation to even lower life than this. I remember well seeing a girl refused admittance to the dance-floor of a masquerade ball whose costume was in every way proper according to the social code of high life. It was quite an elaborate black ball-dress, but not by any means as *décolletée* as I have seen at our assemblies time and time again.

The present ball, however, was by no means one which depended on the advertisements for its scenes of gayety and sport.

A quadrille started as we entered, and several thousand people took part in it.

It was a scene of reckless jollity. The costumes made up for lack of beauty by their gaudiness and grotesqueness. So, too, what the dancers lacked in grace they retrieved in the wildness of their steps. The fumes of wine were everywhere, and out of all those on the floor I do not think a hundred were sober.

The men were of various kinds. Bankers jostled with cracksmen, millionaires with paupers, pickpockets with

swells. Wine and the hunt for pleasure made these join hands.

Of the women there was but one kind, the variety only existing in their looks and degrees of viciousness; and yet there were some beautiful beings among them. Under the influence of the wine they had taken they were reckless to a degree that made it rather saddening at first. When we got into the whirl and excitement of the affair I was carried away from such thoughts.

The scenes off the floor were also interesting.

Here you could see two girls, young and pretty, clad in doublet and hose of red, having a hand-to-hand conflict, but so intoxicated as to be unable to do each other any serious injury. Over there was a party of young men and women raising the wine high over their heads and trying to sing together a popular song in its favor. Now and then some one of the females would upset her glass over one of her companions, or pour it down his neck, and his confusion would be hailed with delight by the rest.

We knew already a number of the prettiest of the fair ones present, and as Alex was widely acquainted, we found many congenial spirits to join us in the dances and partake of the joyous wines.

The cold gray light of dawn was creeping through the windows ere we left the building, each in company with his favorite. There was something ghastly about the appearance of the place at this hour, but we were none of us in a condition to take note of it.

It was about three o'clock next afternoon that we all met at Alex's rooms considerably sobered up. Roland and I had made our arrangements to leave on the evening train.

We chatted together, and compared notes concerning

the jolly time we had had the previous evening—or, rather, that morning.

I don't know why—for I am a thorough man of the world, you know—but it did sound sort of odd to hear Charlie Van Wasson expressing a hope to his sister's future husband that he had had a jolly time at the French ball.

CHAPTER XV.

A GATHERING OF THE CLANS.

"How use doth breed a habit in a man."

I CONTINUED my attentions to Ann Houghton in a quiet sort of a way during the winter, though, of course, I could not appear in the light of a devoted admirer. I seized every opportunity, however, of meeting her at entertainments, and whenever it was possible I had earnest talks with her in opportune corners, or on that never-failing resource of lovers, the stairway.

This was all to the infinite jealousy of Jack Isaacs, who was now devoting all his energies to win Ann for his wife. In fact, it was rumored by the gossips that he was engaged to her. He certainly was very attentive. She began to treat him somewhat in that

familiar manner which, if it did not betoken an actual engagement, at least pointed to one as among the probabilities of the near future.

It was at the first assembly of that season that I fear I carried matters rather too far with Ann for her peace of mind. As fate would have it, I found an opportunity, quite early in the evening, to indulge in a little love-making with her. I think she would have avoided it could she have readily done so, but I had found quite a secluded spot—if you can call a place so where the noise of a thousand voices is in your ears, mingled with the blare of music. We were at least secure from interference for a little while.

I had never seen Ann looking prettier. Her dark eyes were filled with earnestness and a deeper intelligence than usual. Her dress was of white satin, cut *décolletée*, with pure lace about her bosom, against which nestled a few "jacks;" and it was wonderfully becoming. Her hair was worn high on her head and twisted in a coil, which seemed to bring out her profile clear and distinct.

In our conversation we soon drifted back to old times. I could almost understand at this moment how I had come to engage myself to her, though I was glad now to be out of it.

"Do you recall that trip which we took to the shore together last spring," I said, at last, "and how we ascended the light-house?"

I looked at her with an earnest glance, as if to read her soul in her eyes. She could not meet my gaze. I think she admired me for my boldness in recalling the incident under the circumstances. Women will forgive you anything save forgetfulness.

"Of course I remember," she replied, in trembling tones.

"To think that less than a year should have seen so many changes and so many mistakes on both our parts," I continued, musingly, in that reminiscent, regretful tone which I well knew how to assume. "I wish I could live that time over again. I would have it very different. You thought me weak and wicked because of that ridiculous story which appeared in the paper as to the fight in the ballroom downtown. You did not know, then, what you may have heard since, how entirely free from blame I was. Your mother's letter angered me, and in my haste I behaved in a way I have ever since regretted."

She was picking a flower to pieces.

"You will forgive me for that, sweetheart?" I whispered, slowly and earnestly, as I looked her bravely in the eyes.

"Dick! Dick! you must not talk so," she replied, in great agitation; "you do not know all. Besides, remember your word to Agnes."

"What can anything matter, if you——"

I paused, for at this moment Eugene McTavish, a young artist, came up to claim her for the waltz which was just beginning. He was a tall, dark, large-eyed young fellow, rather quiet in his ways, but a thorough Bohemian. He has kindly done some illustrations for these confessions, and I think you will say he has a future before him—whatever that ambiguous phrase may mean.

Ann bowed to me as she departed on his arm. I could see she was agitated.

I followed them toward the foyer. I was also engaged for the dance. It was some time before I could find my partner. We were about starting to waltz, when a sudden commotion arose among the dancers across the room. On making my way there I discovered that Ann Houghton had been seized with a fainting-spell while dancing.

Jack Isaacs came up at once. He must have been on the watch. Together with her mother, he half led, half carried her out into the lobby. As soon as she was sufficiently recovered, he took her to her carriage and went home with her.

Several of the boys who had seen this remarked upon it. As her father came back he said to some of her friends who inquired :

"Oh! it was too much excitement. She will be all right to-morrow."

After a time I was standing talking to Bill Shipley. Mr. Houghton was just behind us. Bill did not know it, and burst out in that loud tone of his, for which he is noted :

"Wonder what right Jack Isaacs has to carry Ann Houghton, and take her home in a cab when she faints?"

Of course I did not anticipate such a saying, or I should have stopped him.

Mr. Houghton heard it, and turned toward us. He was a tall, rather slender man, with clear, piercing eyes and iron-gray mustache, and bore himself with a military air. He glared at Bill as he said :

"The best right in the world, sir! She is engaged to be married to him. Let me advise you, in future, to mind your own business about them." And he turned on his heel and went on talking to his companion.

"You'll learn some day to keep quiet when relatives are about," I said to Bill, who slunk away.

I was not much surprised at the news. Of one thing I was certain, Mr. Jack Isaacs did not possess her love; that was mine still. Her agitation and her fainting-spell, coming after my interview, were indicative to my mind of this fact. A man usually knows when a woman loves him, even though he does not possess any great depth of charac-

ter. There are a thousand trifles which a careful student of human nature notices, which point with all reasonable certainty to the fact. I think, too, a man who is not in love with the woman who loves him, is able to judge more clearly on the subject than a lover. The latter is so blind as to be quite unable to understand those slight things which indicate a woman's love. He looks for some open demonstration such as he wishes to make himself, and not finding this he is plunged in despair. The man whose heart is not touched is, on the contrary, cool and collected, and can comprehend the delicate language of a modest woman's affection.

I cannot say I was without love for Ann, but it was so tempered by circumstances as to leave my mind free for observation, and I was sure she loved me still.

Her engagement showed the result of patience on Jack's part. When he started on his pursuit her mind was prejudiced against him, so much so that she snubbed him in a way few men would have stood. He bore it all with such cheer as he could, and stood patiently by to do those small offices which a woman always so much appreciates. Had my engagement with her not been broken off, he would have been left out in the cold; but if he had not persevered through it all he would never have had a ghost of a chance. Not being able to get her lover, Ann took the most obedient of her attendants.

I was interrupted in my musings by the announcement of supper, and hurried away to find Alice Carlton, who was engaged to me both for supper and the cotillon.

I saw Agnes for a moment ere I reached Alice. The former was looking particularly well to-night in a gown of delicate white tulle tufted over at wide intervals with little puffy clusters of thistle-down. She was engaged for supper

and the cotillon with a young fellow for whom she seemed to have taken quite a fancy. His name was Charles Ridell, but he was universally known as "Lum Riddle." Lum was a nickname taken from the slang "Lum Tum." Charles had gone abroad for three months or so, and when he returned he was so beastly English, you know, that it was positively painful to talk to him. The street cars were "tramways," his baggage was "luggage," his trunk-checks "bits of bross, ye know," and so on through a wide vocabulary.

In appearance he was exceedingly unattractive. He was short, and of late had grown rather stout. He walked with a slow, methodical tread, and held his arms somewhat akimbo, grasping in his right hand, by the middle, when on the street, a large cane with buck-horn handle. His face was full, and had that flushed appearance which comes from continual over-eating and over-drinking. He wore no beard save a red mustache, the hair of which was stiff, and protruded before it curled over his unpleasant mouth. The hair on his head was rather more red than sandy, and that portion of his body was set too far forward, giving him at times an almost stoopy appearance.

His conversation was inane in the extreme, and I never had much fellow-feeling for him. He belonged to one of our best families, and I saw considerable of him from time to time. He was too heavy to be much of a jolly good fellow among "the boys," though his morals were somewhat worse than the average.

You may think it odd that Agnes was not to dance with me; but Alice's partner was prevented from coming by sickness, and Agnes willingly released me when she found I wished to dance with Alice, as Lum was by and had just been hoping for the chance of dancing with her.

What Agnes found to attract her about Lum I could never see, unless it was on that principle which leads women to call those villanously ugly pets—pug dogs—dear, sweet, beautiful creatures. Maybe it was in truth Lum's evident admiration of her, in the face of the fact that he was bored by girls generally—or said he was.

After I had seen to Agnes' comfort, I found Alice a place on the stairs in a seat where, no matter what might be the crowd near us, other men would have no chance of coming close enough to converse for any extended time. I wished to have a serious talk with her. It was necessary to first get her some supper, and I hastened away for that purpose.

I had been to assemblies several times before, and supper-room scenes were not new to me. In the main the present one was naturally the same as in former years, but I think I never, before or since, saw such a crowd of gentlemen who behaved like these under similar circumstances. If they had been engaged in storming an important fortress, which was the key to the enemy's position, they could hardly have used more force than they did in their endeavor to capture the retiring oyster, or the easily frightened boned turkey and chicken croquettes, or the timid terrapin. They jostled each other, and jammed their elbows into the ribs of those who were in their way, with a vehemence and fervor which caused no little unpleasantness. Many were the dress-suits smeared with every variety of edibles, and, in consequence, many and loud were the curses heard from their owners.

Above all could be heard the constant crash of plates and spoons and forks, mingled with the cries of the combatants, the murmurs of conversation, and the dreamy, voluptuous music.

I was feeling somewhat hungry, and thirsty also, and I

deemed it wise to satisfy my longings before taking Alice her share of the booty. I knew she was somewhat opposed to a profusion of wine, and I determined to lay away a supply before my return. There were many men in my own frame of mind, and I joined a group who were emptying bottles very fast.

"Come and have a drink, ole fellow," said Blonde Ray, the most active man in society in the city—I mean in the way of attendance at balls, receptions, and entertainments generally. He was rather short, quite stout, and with full, florid face, red hair and mustache; and it was seldom I did not see his jolly countenance when I went to any entertainment. He had the spirit of good-fellowship largely developed in him, and took life as a huge joke. His manners were such, however, as would not have been endured from any save himself, as he was both boisterous and boyish in his behavior—in fact, what is aptly called "fresh."

At the same time, he was of good family, danced well, knew everybody, was always thoroughly at home, and when so disposed could add much to the success of a ball by his knowledge and tact in introducing the right people to each other. For these things he was sought after, though he was not wealthy.

Besides Ray there were a number of other fellows in our group, including Roland Randall, Bertie Marsden, and Con Creighton, and in a very few minutes we succeeded in doing our duty by the wine. We were, however, in no desperate haste to return to our partners. It was so easy and truthful to ask pardon for delay on the ground that the rooms were so crowded.

After much trouble and delay I secured two plates of eatables for Alice and myself, and added a bottle of wine for the last mentioned. With these I made my way back to h[illegible]

Foster Perkins was talking to her, but he rose as I came up.

"I shall see you again to-night, I hope, Miss Carlton," he said. "I did not tell you how well you were looking, did I? Why, I say, Dick, she really resembles a dainty flamingo bird, with currant jelly trimmings; don't she now?—ah! What?"

To hear a man with a tinge of gray in his hair, and on his face a smile so curious that it was an open question whether he was trying to joke or be serious, talking in this way, was odd in the extreme.

Foster moved off, after bowing in that apologetic manner of his, and was soon repeating his bird-like compliments to other fair girls.

I do not wonder at his admiration for Alice. I had never seen her look more charming. Her dress was of tulle, a prevailing fashion that season. In color it was a delicate pink, and it was trimmed with field daisies, while her bodice was of velvet, in color matching her gown. As she sat on the stairway the toe of one dainty slipper, of a darker shade than her dress, peeped coquettishly from beneath the delicate fabric, like the heart of a white apple-blossom.

We fell almost at once into an earnest conversation. I think that seriousness was my strong-hold with her. She was a thoroughly cultured woman, and though her boundless health and good spirits enabled her to enjoy life to its full, even in frivolous ways, I could see, at times, that she tired dreadfully of it. It was a relief to her to turn from this inanity and converse with someone who was able to understand and appreciate her, and who could sympathize with her earnest and analytical views of human nature and serious side of life.

We began our talk with society in the personal, as seen

around us, and from this strayed away to the more abstract view of it. Then we turned to books and their authors. I spoke to her of my hopes some day of writing a book, and mentioned my success in having published a number of verses in *Life* and *Puck*. She was much interested, and suggested that I should write a volume giving my own memoirs.

"If you could set down in a readable form the story of your life, Mr. Conway," she said, "I think it would prove interesting and instructive."

Maybe this work, when she comes to read it, will prove more fascinating than she had any idea of when she spoke. She could not know of the events which were about to happen, or how large a part she would play in them.

"By the way," I said, after a time, "did you hear of the announcement of the engagement of Jack Isaacs and Ann Houghton?" And I told her of the manner in which Ann's father had announced the fact.

She seemed quite astonished, and said she was not prepared for such an announcement just at that time.

"I thought you were rather attentive there yourself, at one time," she said.

"Oh, no!" I answered;" Ann is a nice little girl, and we were always good friends; but I did not think of her in that way, you know."

"Well, I think it would be far more suitable for her to marry you than Jack. I never liked him. But what strange matches one sees every day. Certainly the contracting parties must see something in each other which outsiders cannot, or they would never marry."

"I fancy that these matches, which seem so peculiar to us, may be taken as tangible proofs of the existence of what is called 'love,'" I answered. "You see people mar-

ried who possess characteristics which would seem to entirely unsuit them for each other. The girl, perhaps, has frivolous tendencies and is fond of society, dancing, balls, theatres, and other light amusements, and may possess in a high degree that delicate nature which takes note of the small things of life and renders them necessary to her comfort. Her chosen husband will be a big, coarse-grained, unwieldly fellow, with neither brains nor delicacy of feeling. They will live to a good old age, happy and contented together. Unless there is something in the idea of love to smoothe over the road of life, how can you account for this state of affairs?"

"I have no doubt your views are correct, but I cannot imagine loving a man—or if loving, marrying him—without he possessed congenial characteristics in the small things of life. If I fell in love with a god, and he ate with his knife, I should recover from my passion very quickly. More than that, I wish for a man who can sympathize with me in the broader views of life, one to whom I could confide the better and nobler side of myself."

"But," said I, "supposing you had engaged yourself under a misapprehension—under the blinding influence of passion, and the knowledge then came to you of the mistake—of the unsuitability of your dispositions—what would you do?"

She considered some time before she answered.

"I think that is one of the most difficult problems which can confront one," she said, at last. "A person in such a position should strive earnestly to see if it is not possible to continue the engagement despite the faults, or whether the faults cannot be corrected. I think that, with many persons, love and hate are largely matters of habit. Once bring yourself to the condition of believing you love some-

one, and under proper opportunities the feeling will increase rather than grow less. This is seen every day in the love between the members of a family, who bear with differences because of their relationship. It is more strongly so with lovers. If they once think they are not suited, the feeling increases and develops into positive hate."

"But," I queried, "suppose a man certain of his own want of love for the girl to whom he is engaged, but equally certain of her continued love for him?"

"Then, I say, break it off at all hazards," she answered; "better make one unhappy and miserable, than run the risk of four persons being so. For a marriage so contracted is liable to result in unhappiness for both, and you would each be certain to meet your fate in someone outside, after it had taken place."

"I think our thoughts are very similar on many subjects," I said. "I find the greatest pleasure in exchanging views with you on society matters, as well as on most other subjects. You have that bold grasp which most women lack, and it adds a strength to your conversation which is delightful."

I was sitting on the stairway one step below her, and I leaned over during our conversation and spoke in subdued tones. Alice had a sweet, clear voice, which was soft and very distinct. I bent my head down still lower as I said, in earnest tones, in my most confidential manner:

"Do you know, Miss Carlton, I fear I have made mistakes in my life on this subject. One in the warmth of life and the spirit of youth often speaks words which mar his future. I fear I have done that; and I have been much worried lately, not on my own account so much as on that of one who is quite innocent and very dear to me. I have felt the need of someone to advise me, who could give me

a true view of the subject from a woman's stand-point, and I think you. A man leads a hard life in these days, and I think the friendship, and, if he can claim it, the love of a good, noble woman, who understands his nature, may be a safeguard to him in many ways. He needs more than a pretty face and merry ways if he would fill the highest responsibilities of life. I may speak to you sometime again of this; in the meanwhile hold it confidential."

I could see I had aroused her interest, for her face had that earnest look which so well became it, and her eyes gleamed with a latent look of inquiry. I think she was about to say something more, but at this moment Lum Riddle came up and claimed her for the waltz which was just beginning—it was the one immediately preceding the cotillon.

"You will come for me for the cotillon," Alice said, as she passed off on his arm.

At this time I cannot say I had any definite idea of breaking my engagement to Agnes; but, to be truthful, I was becoming somewhat wearied of it, and it did not seem unlikely that, in the course of time, it might come to an end. Whenever I met Alice my love and admiration for her increased; and had I not been in the position I was, I should certainly have entered the lists as a determined rival to all the rest of her admirers. In case my engagement to Agnes should be severed, I wished to have fixed in Alice's mind a definite reason on which she could found an excuse for my conduct, even amid the temporary condemnation of the world of society, if such should fall on me.

In the excitement of the cotillon I had no chance for any further confidences, and Alice seemed desirous of avoiding any heavy topics during the rest of the evening.

There was much indulgence in wine on this night, and a

number of the younger men and boys, as many of them were, were well under the influence of their potations ere the great ball was over. The unfortunate part of such occurrences is that those who get in this lamentable condition insist on dancing, and their partners often suffer for them. There were several unpleasant occurrences owing to this failing on the part of the men.

Wine produces such a different effect on different people—with some, excess causes them to become good-natured in the extreme, and you cannot offend them; with others it has quite an opposite effect, and even the most unintentional occurrence will be construed as a deliberate insult. Charlie Walton was one of the latter, and on this particular evening the wine he had taken had put him in a particularly quarrelsome humor.

In this mood he began dancing with Alice. With the number of dancers on the floor, many of them not over-expert, he was certain to have many collisions. Soon one occurred, more violent than any yet, and Charlie released his partner and caught the man with whom he had collided by the throat. It was Blonde Ray, whom he accused of having run into him maliciously. The accused was fiery with wine also, and I fear there would have been an exhibition of fistic science then and there had not several men seized the would-be combatants and called their attention to the unfitness of the time and place. Even then they drew away from each other with reluctance.

I chanced to be near at hand and saw it all. I was fortunate enough to be able to escort Alice to her seat.

She was extremely disgusted with the whole affair.

There were a number of minor incidents of the same kind, not worth while detailing.

Society appeared more than ever under the influence

callow youth, even at this representative assembly; and these boys did not comprehend the use and abuse of wine. I noticed a number, who were beardless, much under the vinous influence.

I at last escorted Agnes and her mother to their carriage, and then stepped back into the lobby.

I noticed Tom Dickson and one of the managers leading a mere boy between them toward the door. His coat was open, his dress-shirt front looked as if it had been roughly handled, and his hair was disarranged. His high hat was tilted to one side, and altogether there was that loose look about him which clearly showed his condition.

"What's the matter, Tom?" I asked, smiling.

"This young man insisted on going home with a lady whom he does not know, and who objects to his escort. We have concluded that it will be well for him to walk by himself—if he can."

I soon left the building in company with some companions.

It was snowing; softly, yet rapidly, the great flakes fell. The long lines of carriages, with their steaming horses, occupied most of the wide street; but their number was rapidly growing less, for the ball was breaking up now. We stood for a few moments on the steps. It was quite a poetical sight to watch the fair beings who had graced the ball come forth wrapped in their opera-cloaks and carrying their flowers. A moment's pause, then a dainty foot touched the carriage-step, and beauty disappeared in the darkness of the interior of the cab. A slender hand, maybe, was thrust out to receive the warm pressure of the cavalier who waited this last opportunity; then the door was closed with a crash, and the vehicle rolled off into the falling snow. Once we saw a gentlemanly fellow, who did not

seem to be in evening dress, but appeared to be waiting outside, step forward and open the door of a carriage as a bright, blue-eyed little girl tripped down the steps, followed by a dowager. The man remained uncovered while they entered. We heard Miss Pert say:

"What, are *you* here!"

We could not catch the man's reply. As the carriage drove away we saw him stoop down and raise from the snow a great "jack" rose which she had dropped, whether intentionally or otherwise we knew not. It was all he had to remember the assembly by. Did it contain hope for him?

We adjourned to the Philadelphia Club, and played cards for an hour perhaps; and we then went to a house which we knew we should find open, with ample entertainment even at that late hour.

I awoke next day in my own room at my father's house. I have no remembrance of how I reached there. It is seldom that I cannot recall every movement of a night of enjoyment, as my head usually keeps remarkably clear. I must confess to a most unpleasant feeling on this particular morning. I was attacked by the blue devils in their worst form. Life was unsatisfactory, and I was peevish and feverish and dry. Why is there always a "next morning" to all the enjoyments of life? Why must the joy and passion and pleasure fade in the cold, gray light of dawn, and in their place come the grim visages of satiety or remorse?

Down the street a German band played Walteufel's beautiful waltz, "Les Sirènes." It had been a favorite of the ball of the previous evening. How it all came back to me!—the heavy odor of the flowers, the mass of dancers, and the fair forms I had clasped in the waltz.

I mused in a sleepy sort of way over [redacted]

to Agnes, and my interview with Alice. I was dissatisfied with matters as they were, that was certain.

I arose at last, and took off my dress-suit; for I found I had retired without making any change in my costume of the evening. I then had a brandy-and-soda and took a hot bath. I was annoyed to discover that one of my eyes was badly discolored. I could not recall how it had happened, but I have an indistinct recollection of a playful blow from the end of some fellow's cane.

I was to attend a dinner-party in the evening, and it was necessary to have my eye painted. There was a man I had patronized before, who has a studio for the purpose on Fifth Street, and I went up there in the afternoon and had my discolored optic treated in a very artistic manner. No one noticed any defect, save Agnes, I think; but I told her I had slipped on the pavement, and, as I fell, had hit my eye against a hitching-post.

CHAPTER XVI.

A STAGE HEROINE.

"Oh, there be players that I have seen play."

SOMETIME during the late winter Roland Randall was wedded to Miss Van Wasson, at her father's house in New York. I was his best man, and the wedding in every way was a brilliant one.

The ceremony took place in the evening, and there was a grand reception and supper. Champagne flowed freely, and not a few of the guests became somewhat influenced by it. I was not among their number. Not satisfied with over-indulgence themselves, they seemed determined that the bridegroom should celebrate the event of his marriage in like manner. They plied him with wine on every hand, and insisted on his responding to their numerous toasts. Had it not been that I seized an opportunity to call him aside and remind him of the matter in a quiet way, I be-

lieve we should have been compelled to carry him to the carriage in order to start him on his wedding-journey.

"Say, Roland, old man," I said, as we stepped into an alcove at my instigation, "do you know what those fellows are trying to do? They wish to get you under the influence of wine, as a beginning to your married life. If they had tried this two or three evenings ago, I should not have bothered about it, for you are able to hold your own in that way at any time; but if you will think of the position of the dear girl you have but just wedded, you will see how deuced unjust it is at this time to go to excess."

"Dick, you are a true friend," Roland said. "I will not touch another drop to-night!"

He was true to his promise, and I had the satisfaction of knowing that, while Mrs. Randall would undoubtedly be compelled in the future to learn how to deal with her husband when he had looked upon wine to excess, yet she would not be called on to learn such an unpleasant lesson at such an early stage of her married life.

I am, I suppose, rather particular about such things, for the others seemed to think it would be fine sport to get Roland intoxicated on the night of his marriage. Married men must drink, of course; but it struck me that over-indulgence might be deferred until later on in the contract. As a matter of fact, I can testify that since her marriage Mrs. Randall must certainly have become an expert in managing Roland under such conditions, she has had such a wide experience.

I remember quite well that it was a week or two after this that I began an intimacy which had considerable influence on my life and was marred by a touch of the tragic.

It happened that one evening, in company with a number of fellows, I strolled into one of the commoner theatres

of the town, where they still maintained a stock-company. The plays produced were for the most part of a tragic kind, and the leading lady was a young girl who, it was said, gave great promise of a successful career. I believe no one of us had ever seen her before; and as we chanced to have an hour which we were at a loss to know what to do with, we stopped in to see Daisy Millman, in her great and glorious creation of "Fanchon, the Cricket."

The curtain had risen on the second act, and at the time we came in the star was not on the stage. In a few moments, however, she entered.

She had no sooner spoken than I felt, at once, that unaccountable attraction for her which I have before spoken of as making me believe in the affinities of souls. She possessed a clear, sweet voice, but spoke with that sharpness of accent which made every syllable stand by itself. It was like the chirrup of some forest-bird, it was so distinct and clear. When I came to look at her more closely, I was struck with the natural beauty of the girl.

She was of medium height, and her figure, while full, was lithe and charmingly moulded. When she moved across the stage there was about her walk that grace of action which is born rather than acquired. Her features were regular—her mouth, in particular, being refined-looking and with delicate, cupid-bow curves. Her teeth were white and even; and her eyes dark and bright, and with a penetration in them which seemed to take in at a glance every object within range of her vision. Her hair was black as jet, and worn in a loose mass which fell over her shoulders. Now and then she shook it back with a charming little motion which brought out every grace of her face and figure.

I was not the only one who admired her. The four or five

fellows who were in our party were also much interested. I resolved that I would become acquainted with her before many days.

"Who knows her, Con?" I asked of Creighton, who was with us.

"Yes, Con, take us up and introduce us. You are a connoisseur in such matters; you surely must know her," another said, laughing.

This was always a joke on Con, who, as I think I have told you, compelled his *fiancée* to break off their engagement because of his notorious attentions to the *prima donna* of a popular opera-troupe.

"I am sorry to say I do not know her," Con replied. "They say she is a nice little girl, though, and I know a fellow who can present you, if he will. He knows her father; and I think if you lend the old man some money, it will be a sure way of getting his favor as far as Daisy is concerned. She's a careful girl for one in her position, they say."

I would have willingly stayed until the end of the performance, so interested had I become in the star; but the other fellows wished to go up to McGettigan's for a game of cards, and of course I could not find any good excuse for refusing to be one of their number.

I did not relinquish my desire or determination to meet the girl, however, and later on in the evening I asked Con, confidentially, who was the man who could get me an introduction.

"Still determined, are you?" he said, smiling. "Well, you will have no trouble in finding him. The man is Ed Houghton, and, as you know him well, you will not need further assistance from me."

When I saw Ed, however, and spoke to him about the in-

troduction, he was not very anxious to assist me. I judged this from the alacrity with which he promised to do so. Had he been doubtful I should have believed him. I found by a few questions that he was somewhat interested in her himself, and of course he did not wish me to spoil his chances. From what I could gather elsewhere, she did not care for him ; but, naturally, he lived in hopes.

I at last persuaded him to come down to a definite evening on which he promised, if she were willing, to present me to the young lady.

I knew that no reliance was to be placed on him, however, and some evenings afterward I engaged a box at her theatre, and had an enormous bouquet of flowers sent up to her at the close of the first act. I put a card on them—

"From your admirer in the right-hand box to-night."

She wore some of the flowers in the next act, and kissed her hand to me from behind the tormentor, where the rest of the audience could not see her.

I had written a little note before starting for the theatre. It was to this effect :

"Dear Fanchon : My friend, Ed Houghton, who says he knows you, has promised to present me. Do not refuse if he asks you, and see that he does ask you, will you not? I want so much to see you and talk with you. Your acting is charming."

When I saw that she wore my flowers and encouraged me, I sent this round to her by an usher. Even girls of this class appreciate a suitor who is not too forward at the beginning.

In a few minutes an answer came back:

"I will send for you at the end of the play.

"FANCHON."

You may be sure that nothing less than a fire in the theatre would have caused me to depart before the close of the performance.

True to her promise, at the close of the last act a messenger came from behind the scenes and requested me to step back into the green-room. Arriving there, I was asked to be seated, as the star was washing the paint off.

A motley crowd of barnstormers of different sexes were moving about in various stages of *déshabillé*. The dressing-rooms of the theatre were evidently not very large, and what they lacked in space was made up by odd corners of the stage.

After I had waited for a considerable time Daisy appeared.

She wore a street-dress of dark olive-color; and a natty little bonnet, surmounted by a bird of gaudy plumage, was perched coquettishly on her head.

Her looks improved on near acquaintance. Her cheeks were not painted nor her eyebrows pencilled, and she had an appearance quite refined and intelligent. She had none of the brassy air of the soubrette, but behaved with that consciousness of superiority which became a leading lady, even of so small a theatre as that over which she held sway.

She came over to me, smiling.

"I'm awfully glad to meet you," she said, "and very much obliged to you for the flowers," and she held out her hand. It was a soft, chubby hand, and met mine with a firm grasp of seeming friendship.

"I have never ceased to think of you since I first saw

you, over two weeks ago. I have been trying to meet you ever since," I said, as she paused.

We chatted together for a few minutes, on what subjects I do not recall, and then she spoke of going home. I bethought me of a plan to continue our conversation.

"Could we not have some supper somewhere?" I said; "I am deucedly hungry."

My hunger was really manufactured, but I have never known an actress who was not so after a performance.

"Well, we must have 'pop' along, for propriety's sake, if we do, you know," and she looked up at me and smiled in the most bewitching way imaginable.

"Pop" now came forward, and he proved to be a very bad specimen of the genus. He was a man of short stature, with a heavy, round face, long, grizzly mustache, and a ten-days' beard of the same kind. His face was puffy and his eyes bleary; in short, he was a confirmed sot, who never did a stroke of work that he could by any possibility avoid, but lived—if such an existence could be so called—on the scanty earnings of his daughter.

We went to the best restaurant which was near, and I ordered a supper for three. While we waited for the order to be filled, the old man sat in one corner of the room and dozed while I talked in a low tone to Daisy.

She told me her history. It was a very simple story.

Her mother had supported the old man by the work of her hands while she lived; and at her death, when Daisy was about ten years old, he felt no inclination to labor. He did manage, indeed, to get a dollar or two now and then, and thus kept them in bread and rags. When Daisy was fifteen years old she secured a position in a variety-hall, to come out between the acts and sing popular sentimental songs; for her voice, though not strong, was true and sweet.

From this position she rose, step by step, to her present exalted station.

The associations of the stage, even for those who stand at the top of the profession, are demoralizing. The very atmosphere of the green-room is impregnated with much that is offensive. The texts and motives and plots of many of the highest class of dramas are full of ideas which, night after night, drummed into the players' ears, cause them to lose consciousness of the wrong of many things, and, at the best, so accustom them to the evil that it seems all-pervading. If this is so in such instances, you can see what a life little Daisy must have passed through before she reached her present station.

Yet she had a true, loving heart, and was as honest in her character as nature herself. The true description of her is best expressed when I say she was lovable. Her good-nature was always with her, yet she had a depth of feeling which would have graced a girl in a sphere far higher. There were charming little ways about her which won my heart at once, and she was as true to me during the continuance of our intimacy as if I had been her only admirer.

I soon found that her father, though a painful reality in person, was but a light fiction as far as propriety went. The loan of a few dollars was sufficient to cause him to go on a "spree" and leave his daughter to the care of herself.

There was something very touching about her affection for her grizzly parent. He had never done one act in his life, I believe, which was of value to her, yet she called him "pop" in such an affectionate tone of voice as would have made a decent father happy; and she would tend him as kindly when he came home from a spree as if he was the dearest thing in all the world to her.

Well, time went on, and the intimacy between Daisy and myself began to be talked about at the clubs. Several times I was seen driving with her during the day, and once or twice I was recognized by friends when with her on the street at night. The men tried to joke with me about it at times, but I turned the subject.

I tried to persuade Daisy to retire from the stage, for a time at least; but she was so determined to succeed in that line that she would not consent to any plans which cut her off from her profession. She was rehearsing a new play, in which she was to make a great jump from a rock to a ledge below and save her stage-lover from savages. Next to myself, this play was the centre of her interest.

During my infatuation for the little actress I continued my intimacy with my betrothed Agnes. I managed to see her many times despite my devotion to Daisy. But my business did not give me any violent trouble; and, as my afternoons and evenings were always my own, I managed to divide my time in such a way as not to neglect either of them much.

So far Agnes had heard nothing, I am sure, of my affair with Daisy; but yet I thought she was growing more serious in her behavior toward me every day. She would prevent little familiarities on my part, and her mind seemed troubled by doubts. These she would never confess or even acknowledge to me, but, with my knowledge of woman's nature, I came soon to see that she was troubled about me. Not that her love for me was less deep, but that she seemed to consider me less to be trusted.

Society and its amusements occupied much of my time while in her company, as we were invited everywhere and she was devoted to the gay side of life.

A rather unpleasant adventure took place [redacted]

which I must relate, as after-events are somewhat connected with it.

Coming away from Mrs. Marsden's ball one evening, I stopped, in company with Ed Houghton, at McGettigan's, and we ordered a bottle of wine. Agnes had left the ball early in the evening, suffering with a sick-headache. As Mrs. Marsden was one of those who did not approve of wine, there was a very dry supper, and many of the boys left immmediately after it was served.

Ed and I were feeling in a very jolly mood, and we drank deeply. While we were chatting, Con Creighton happened in, and he joined us. We kept up the dissipation for some time. At last we started up Walnut Street for home.

We were all in a dare-devil mood, and ready for any kind of sport. As we passed up the street, we noticed before a large brown-stone house a canopy and a carpet laid over the pavement, the usual accompaniments of a large entertainment.

"Bet you both fifty dollars that neither of you will go in there and eat supper!" Con cried.

"Whose house is it?" I inquired.

"Mrs. John Rawlings'," he answered.

"I don't know her, but I will take your bet," I said.

"And I also," chimed in Ed.

We were both in that sort of humor when we did not appreciate the trouble which might ensue from our hasty action, but looked on the whole affair as a lark.

Con would not enter, as he knew the host. He said he would take our word for what happened after we were inside. He did not have to do so.

Ed and myself walked along up the steps, and the door was opened by the colored servant who stood within. We were so late that he did not have his card-receiver in his

hand, and we passed on incognito, so far, and made our way to the dressing-room.

We were in evening-dress, and amidst the multitude of guests we hoped to escape detection by host or hostess. As a matter of fact, at large entertainments, with the promiscuous inviting which is so often done, it is quite impossible for those who give them to remember the names of all who may be present. Especially is this so when there are a number of sons and daughters, or other members of the household, who invite. When the numbers present run up into the hundreds, and are invited by different persons, it is a practical impossibility for each one to remember the friends of all the others. As this was the case at Mrs. Rawlings', we seemed in no great danger of detection.

Mrs. Rawlings' friends were to a large extent ours, and when we reached the supper-room we found many familiar faces. I was soon quite at home, chatting and talking gayly with a number of pretty girls.

All went well for a time, and I had quite forgotten that I was not a regularly invited guest, when I was aroused by a rather high-voiced discussion at the other end of the room. I could distinguish Ed's voice.

I crossed over and found that my friend had gotten into trouble.

From what I could gather then, and what was told me afterward, it appeared that a private detective had been engaged by Mrs. Rawlings, as is usual at large entertainments, and that Mr. Rawlings, who was a coarse-grained, suspicious, old retired pork-packer, not knowing Ed, and perhaps seeing a conscious look of guilt on his face, had put the detective on his track. When the latter gentleman, on making inquiries of all the members of the household, could not find anyone who could identify Ed[illegible]

went up to him and asked him who he was. It was here that Ed made his mistake. He was wanting in balance on some points, I think.

"Oh! I am Ned Neal," he said.

Now, Ned Neal was a well-known man in society, and Ed had the reputation of looking much like him; but why Ed should have told the tale he did I am still at a loss to understand. But, as I have before said, he would rather tell a lie than the truth at any time.

Mine host and the detective and some of the guests crowded about, and, as it happened, none of them knew Ed. One of the men knew Ned Neal well, and very positively bore witness to the fact that Ed was prevaricating.

When I came up they were preparing to search him, in order to ascertain if he had not concealed some of the spoons on his person. Ed appeared to be quite at sea as to his future course.

I saw that the way things were there was only one way out of the trouble. That was to explain matters truthfully to Mr. and Mrs. Rawlings, and then leave the house. In any case, I feared we were doomed to be the gossip of the town for weeks.

"Mr. Rawlings," I said, "will you step aside with me for a moment, and I will set this matter straight."

We entered a small side-room. In a few words I explained that the entrance we had made into his house was the result of a wager, and that no apology I felt would condone our fault, but that I hoped he would excuse it as the result of a boyish desire for novelty.

That the old man was not a gentleman was very apparent, for he swore two or three loud oaths and asserted in very vigorous language that we were a couple of blacklegs and scoundrels.

I requested him not to be so violent, and told him the best way was to inform the guests that it was a mistake of the detective. I endeavored to persuade him that it would not be well for him to be placed in the position of having us brought into notoriety in his house, but my pleadings were quite in vain.

"No! dash my buttons," he screamed, "I will tell everybody in this house who you are, and the town shall ring from end to end with the affair to-morrow. You fellows must be taught manners. This will be a good way to make an impression on your delicate hides."

He was evidently thinking of some of his old porkers.

I left the room, and Ed and I quitted the house at once. The detective accompanied us to the dressing-room, and from thence to the door. The guests were evidently in a state of amazement. One of my acquaintances came up and asked me what was the trouble as I came downstairs. I told him it was some of old Rawlings' vulgarity which had driven us off. This was true in a degree.

Old Rawlings was true to his word, and next day the whole affair was the talk of the town.

Ned Neal made Ed apologize in a most abject manner for his offence in connecting his name with the trouble. I had never seen Ned excited before, but he swore that he would shoot Ed if he did not ask pardon and sign an abject apology which he drew up.

I felt wretched on the morning following the escapade, and did not get down-town until late in the day. I was detained at my office until evening. When I reached home I found a letter addressed in Mrs. Moore's handwriting, and a package from Agnes. I broke the seal of the letter with a feeling of some interest.

"Dear Dick," it ran, "I have seen Mrs. Rawlings to-day,

and she has given me a detailed account of your adventure of last night, and also of your intimacy with Daisy Millman, the actress. I do not think you can deny these things, as they are so well and so clearly authenticated. If they are true you must see that an engagement cannot longer exist between yourself and Agnes, and with this note you will receive one from her in which she releases you from your promises."

Inclosed was a charming little note from Agnes. There were but a few words.

"I know you will not deny the story of your affection for the actress," she said. "I have seen its influence on you from day to day. As to the other story, I am ashamed to know that it is true. We part forever now. You, with your knowledge of the world, know how much I love you, and how impossible it is that we can ever meet as lovers again. You have some fine attributes, Dick. I pray God every day that you may some time grow to have a nobler nature; as it is, God pity you."

The package contained the ring I had given her and a number of presents.

After dinner I threw myself down on the lounge in my room and lit a cigar. I was not feeling in the best of humor with the world; perhaps this was in part due to my physical condition, which was below par. I had no inclination to go out.

I turned over the evening paper. There was the story of our escapade under the gossip of the evening. Our names were not given. "Two prominent society men," it said.

I mused over matters past, present, and future. I had never before thought so highly of Agnes. She was indeed a true, pure girl, whose love was worth keeping. It was not to be mine, though, it seemed. After all, what had I

done out of the way of the world in which we lived? It was no uncommon thing for young men to have attachments for actresses; and as for Rawlings, if he had not been an old, brutal pork-packer, he would have seen that we were gentlemen and excused us. It was a mistake though, going there. If it had not been for that, Agnes and her mother would never have learned of the actress.

By the way, this was the opening night of Daisy's new play, and I had promised her to go and see it. I had forgotten about it until now. I was very weary, and while I was debating whether I should go or not, I must have fallen asleep, for when I was aroused by a knock at my door the French clock on my mantel stood at 11.25.

"Come in," I called out, and the servant-man entered and handed me an envelope of the District Telegraph Company. I tore it open. The message ran:

"Daisy is hurt. Come to her rooms at once."

Her father had sent it. What could have happened? I seized my cape-coat and hat. I was fortunate enough to find a disengaged hansom passing down the street. I directed the man to drive at full speed to Daisy's lodgings.

Her father came to the door.

"Mr. Conway," he said, while tears ran from his bleared eyes and down his pink cheeks, "my poor Daisy missed her jump to-night in the theatre, and her spine's hurted, and she's shooked up inside."

I ran quickly up to her room. The doctor was there. Daisy was lying quietly on the bed. I came in noiselessly. The doctor saw me and came across to me.

I caught him by the hand.

"Is there any hope?" I asked, in a whisper.

"None," he replied, gravely, and in a low tone, so that she might not hear. "She may live until morning; not longer."

gazed at me with a depth of inquiry which was positively painful.

"Daisy," I said, "none of us know what comes beyond; but they tell us that there is some home where we shall find rest from the cares here. If there is such a spot, where forgiveness and love hold sway, you will find a place there."

She murmured something I could not understand, and then passed into a sort of stupor.

I sat by her bedside a long time holding her hand, fearing to disturb her by relinquishing it. At last she moaned and turned uneasily. Then she began to talk again in an incoherent way. She repeated some of the lines of "Led Astray," one of her favorite plays. Soon she reached the verses on which the play is founded. I heard her murmur:

"There is another life . . . I long to meet,
Without which life my life is incomplete. . . .
Oh! sweeter self, like me, thou art astray,
Striving . . . with all thy might . . . to find the way."

Then she paused, and a change passed over her face. It was a look of agony, followed by one of peace. Then came, in a dreary way, the words:

"Straying . . . like mine to find . . . the breast,
On which alone . . . the weary heart can rest."

She gave a slight gasp, her fingers trembled nervously, and then she lay quiet and still.

I sat for a few moments longer with the dead girl's hand clasped in mine.

Then the doctor came in. He was a young, serious-faced, earnest, manly looking fellow.

"Doctor," I said, as he crossed to the bed, "the last act is over—Daisy is dead."

CHAPTER XVII.

OLD POINT AS A SANCTUARY.

"I am a man
More sinned against than sinning."

TO say that the whole town rang with the story of my entanglement with the actress, my broken engagement with Agnes, and my conduct in entering Rawlings' without an invitation, does not begin to express the state of things after the occurrences narrated in the previous chapter. I became notorious, if not famous.

The newspapers in some way got hold of my relations with Daisy, and some of the less particular Sunday ones gave a column to the affair. To be sure, my name was only designated by an initial, but everyone identified me at once. Most of my friends among my own sex knew something of my attachment before her

death, and afterward all the town became familiar with it. The sensational manner in which she left this world naturally contributed much to this notoriety.

Two days after her death I left town for a week or two in order that the trouble might have a chance to blow over. My destination was Old Point Comfort.

I did not call on Agnes or her mother before my departure, as there seemed nothing to be gained by it; neither did I write to them. It would have been quite in vain to deny the truth of my affair with Daisy or the adventure at Rawlings', and when you have nothing to say it is best to refrain from speaking. I felt that it was quite unlikely that I should ever meet Agnes again as her lover. I cannot say that I was plunged in despair on this account. The culmination of unpleasant things had upset me considerably, I must confess. Poor little Daisy's sad end made a deep impression on my mind. But while I loved Agnes dearly, yet our relations of late had been so cold and strained that the mere breaking of the formal bonds was not so unexpected as it might have been.

My father naturally heard of my misdoings, and spoke to me of them before my departure from the city. I should say, rather, I spoke to him. I told him, to begin with, of my proposed vacation—that I wanted change and rest.

He replied that he thought I must need them both after what he had heard about me. He made no complaints, however, about my actions. This was his usual manner—taciturn and unsympathetic. During my engagement with Agnes my father had continued his pleasant relations with her mother, and I now ventured to express a hope that my actions might not in any way cause an interruption of this friendship.

To this he made no reply.

After a time he asked me how long I expected to be ab-

sent, and what I desired done in the meantime as to my professional affairs.

I replied that I should be gone for a week or two, and as to my business I had arranged that it be cared for. In regard to the stories which were going the rounds about me, I suggested that no attention be paid to them. In the course of a few weeks, as soon as some new subject of gossip arose, they would fade away into insignificance.

During the expression of this wish on my part my father gave utterance to one or two expressive grunts, but that was all.

There is one noticeable fact about fashionable society which is admirable, I think, and that is, that although, while a scandal lasts, it is prone to exaggerate and talk it over to a tiresome degree, yet as soon as the subject is talked out it is soon forgotten, and those who were connected with the trouble take their old places, and no one thinks the worse of them. This was so in relation to Con Creighton's affair with the prima donna, and I felt reasonably sure that it would be the same with regard to my trouble.

It may be that my determination to make Old Point Comfort my resting-place in the interim was somewhat owing to my having noticed, a day or two previous, that among the arrivals there was Miss Alice Carlton.

It is true I felt in my heart that she would hear of my doings even before I saw her. Such news is a godsend to girl correspondents—and who among the fair sex has not many? At the same time, I knew that when I was on the ground I could dress the story in such guise as would take away any offence it might have in her eyes.

The first person I met on my entrance to my hotel on the evening of my arrival at Old Point was, not Miss Carlton, however, but my wealthy young friend, Sarah Kurtz.

She held out her hand to me warmly.

"What is this I hear about your misdoings, you fascinating man?" she said, laughing, after the first greetings were over.

"I do not know what you may have heard," I said, "but you can depend on getting a full and truthful account of the whole affair, with all the latest additions, if you will interview me later."

"I shall depend on you," she replied.

I escorted her down the steps to her carriage, which was waiting for her, and I assisted her in. She waved her hand to me with a smile as she drove off.

In the present aspect of affairs Sarah was a girl to be encouraged. She was certainly not handsome, but so far as her wealth went she was the best catch in the city.

After dinner that evening I had a long talk with her in one of the cosey little card-rooms of the house.

Perhaps the one redeeming feature about Sarah, outside of her wealth, was that she was a thorough woman of the world. Had she been a strict Quaker I do not think she would have been endurable, even had she been possessed of ten millions in place of one. But she was thoroughly familiar with the ways of society, and could understand men's actions without much detailed explanation.

I gave her a reasonably truthful description of the whole of my trouble with Agnes, and the sad death of Daisy. Over this latter character and my affection for her I threw a glamour of poesy. I think Sarah thoroughly understood my position, but she was too much a woman of the world to be offended at a little romance.

I bid, of course, for her sympathy as to the action of Agnes in casting me off. This, I explained to her, was a cruel action, for I had been the most devoted of lovers.

"After all, Miss Kurtz," I said, "girls who are gifted with the kind of beauty Miss Moore possesses are very apt to be vain and capricious. I discovered, after I had been *fiancé* for some time, that Agnes was constantly bidding for the admiration of other men, and while I kept up my devotion to her, outwardly, through it all, her behavior cut me to the heart. This was the reason of my infatuation with the actress. I confide in you as a true friend. I know your heart and discretion can both be relied on."

There are few girls in society who do not like to be taken into the confidence of a man of the world. It is always fascinating to the novice to look cautiously over the edge of a precipice, even though she may contemplate with horror the idea of lying crushed to death on the rocks below. When her head becomes steady from experience, it is a pleasure to her to see how near she can go to the edge without falling over.

I have, over and over again, seen girls, during their first season out, encourage the attentions of men whom they must have known were leading fast lives, though they found it necessary to snub the few reliable men they knew while doing so. It may be said, perhaps, that this was because they did not understand in what the misdoings of the men consisted. But I am certain in many instances that this excuse would not avail. Girls generally have ways of their own for discovering men's failings.

After hearing all my story Sarah gave me a lecture about my behavior, but it was rather to preserve the form than from any effect she expected it to produce on me.

"Ah!" I said, "if I only had someone like you to take an interest in me, to understand my failings and sympathize with me in trouble, I should be a different man."

Alice Carlton was staying at the Hygeia Hotel, and I sought her there later in the evening.

I found her in a corner of one of the large parlors *tête-à-tête* with a certain Captain Wilton, one of the military men at the fortress. His attentions were somewhat noticeable, and I found out, later on, that he was deeply infatuated with her.

"Mr. Conway, how are you?" she said, not rising, and only holding out her hand when mine was offered in such a way that she could not well refuse to take it. This was a chilling reception, for she was usually most hearty in her greetings.

"Aha!" I said to myself; "here a different effect has been produced by my city episode. Never mind, the more opposition the more credit for overcoming it."

Whatever else I may lack, it cannot be justly maintained that I am not gifted with strong determination when aroused. At this moment I cast a careful glance over the events of the past few weeks and considered them in connection with the effect they must have had on Alice Carlton. I saw clearly the difficulties with which I had to contend, yet I never felt more determined to win back my old place in her esteem—nay, even her love—if it was within man's power. The objects to be overcome were worthy of my efforts; the prize worth the battle.

I resolved in my mind that I would deny that I had been in any way entangled with Daisy, save as a friend, and that I was a most dreadfully abused man, and should be sympathized with instead of condemned; that I had been thrown over by Agnes Moore from a whim, and that she had alleged as a cause my attachment for Daisy; and that the reports which were in circulation were gross exaggerations.

Sarah, I knew, would never betray my confidence to Alice. They were not near friends. Alice was such a strict girl in some ways that it would never have been wise to speak as frankly to her as to Sarah.

After some formal conversation, which was very much strained, the captain had the good sense to leave us together. It is difficult for an outsider to tell whether two friends who meet in the manner of Alice and myself are lovers or enemies, and it worried Captain Wilton greatly, I think. I am convinced that he considered us lovers and departed soon, fearing he was *de trop*.

"Miss Carlton," I said, after his departure, "I am not unaware of the maxim which says that 'he who excuses himself accuses himself;' but I fear some unfavorable reports have come to your ears about me. I can notice a change in your manner."

She blushed beautifully.

"It is true," she said, "that I have received a very detailed account of what seems to me a very sad and unfortunate occurrence, with which you were intimately connected."

"And you think I am greatly to blame?" I asked.

"If the facts are true, I do not see how you can be innocent," she replied.

This was the opportunity which I wished for, and I proceeded to explain, in a most exact and circumstantial way, the whole of my trouble. It was on an entirely different basis from my relation to Sarah.

I placed myself before Alice as absolutely innocent of anything more than the indiscretion of having taken a friendly interest in the advancement of a youthful actress who was possessed of undoubted talents. I stated in proof of this fact that Agnes had known of my friendship

for Daisy long before the final scene, and had only used it as an excuse for the severance of our relations later on. I recalled the conversation which we had had at the assembly, and told her what a mistake I had made in entering into the compact with Agnes; that it was begun on purely sentimental grounds, and that no bond of real love existed between us. It was a fortunate thing I was able to point to that conversation; it was of much force now. I went into the matter quite at length, and used all my force of argument to make her believe in my innocence.

The Rawlings matter was not so easy to explain away, but then it was by no means so serious. I told her as to this that Ed Houghton had assured me that he was very intimate with the Rawlingses', as Mrs. Rawlings was his second cousin, and, as I had been dining late, I had believed his story and had entered with him. Ed was such a monstrous falsifier that this appeared to take some hold on Alice's feelings.

I do not fancy that I succeeded in convincing her of all the facts as I stated them, but I certainly created such indecision in her mind that she was compelled to give me the benefit of the doubt.

This accomplished, I was safe. I was convinced that as soon as the subject died out in other people's minds she would feel the force of what I had said, and doubts would be dispelled in my favor.

After that evening our friendship continued somewhat on the old terms. I had many opportunities of seeing her, despite the captain and a score of other admirers. I was thoroughly at home in a race of this kind, and as Alice rather favored me, I found no difficulty in securing many hours alone with her.

She was a most charming girl to converse with, and

grew more attractive every day. She was a beautiful, intelligent woman of the world, cultivated by reading and travel, and yet with all the tender sentiments and character of her sex. I do not remember ever before talking so much sense to a woman in the same time.

My plan, as laid out, was to eschew love-making with her for the present. I knew she would not care for a word of it, even though true, if it came so immediately in the steps of the severance of my engagement with Agnes.

I made up for my silence on that subject, however, while with her, by pouring a tale of love and devotion into Sarah's ears upon every available opportunity. I think I succeeded in attracting her somewhat. I believe I was always a favorite of hers, however. In any case, I considered it could do no harm to keep her interested in me, so that, if the worst came to the worst, I might have a fortune to rely on. Sarah was not the kind of a girl who, in the meantime, would be liable to be caught by a fortune-hunter. She was quite at home in discriminating, generally, between the true man and the fortune-hunter; or, rather, I should say, she was an expert as to the latter, having experience only with them. I presume she looked upon me as a man of means, and therefore somewhat indifferent as to her fortune.

My intended sojourn of two weeks was lengthened to over three, for I found that Alice's stay was to continue so long.

Toward the close of my vacation I had the opportunity of rendering Alice a slight service, which I thought was of great advantage to me, as it placed her under obligations which she could not easily repay.

It was an incident rather for a novel than for this dry dissertation on society life. It occurred in this wise.

I was one evening idly strolling down the road near the

hotel. Sarah was dining and Alice had gone riding with Captain Wilton. There were only two or three other girls about the place for whom I cared anything, and they were not to be seen. The sun had set some time back, and the twilight was fading.

I was aroused by a cry down the road. I looked up. A horse was galloping madly toward me, and clinging to his back was the form of a woman, her hat off and her hair streaming wildly in the breeze.

I should not have seriously disturbed myself but for the fact that, as the animal drew nearer, I recognized that his rider was Alice.

At once I saw my chance for an action which, if successful, would give me a claim on her.

Fortunately for me the wild animal came on my side of the road. When he was within a few feet of me I sprang forward with the agility of a cat and grasped the reins, which were hanging down.

The horse had been ridden with a vicious curb-chain bit, and when my weight was thrown on the reins it almost tore his jaw off. I never saw a beast stopped more quickly. He swerved completely round, dragging me with him. The jar was so great that Alice was thrown from the saddle. The beast did not touch her with his feet, however.

A servant and several of the guests came out. I made the former take the reins, while I rushed to the assistance of the fallen rider.

She lay, white and motionless, in the dust. I lifted her in my arms and took her into the parlor. She was a heavy burden, but worth the carrying. She was more frightened than hurt, and by the morning she was as bright as ever.

She thanked me for my effort in a quiet but sincere manner, which really touched my heart. I do not know when

I experienced a greater sense of pleasure than then. I somehow felt as though I had a reliable chance of winning this girl now, and I determined to allow no opportunity to pass by.

A few days later we left for home. I say *we*. Alice and her aunt, who chaperoned her, and myself travelled together. It was a charming trip.

Though Alice was a woman of the world in her thoughts and comprehensions of the affairs of life, there was an almost girlish freshness and interest about her which made her doubly charming.

During the trip we left the train once at a wayside station for a little walk on the platform together.

The planking was low, and it was necessary for her to depend largely on my assistance in alighting. By some mischance her foot slipped, and she was compelled to resign herself for the moment wholly to my arms. It was sweet to feel that for one instant she looked only to me for her support.

She laughed and grew rosy as she was released.

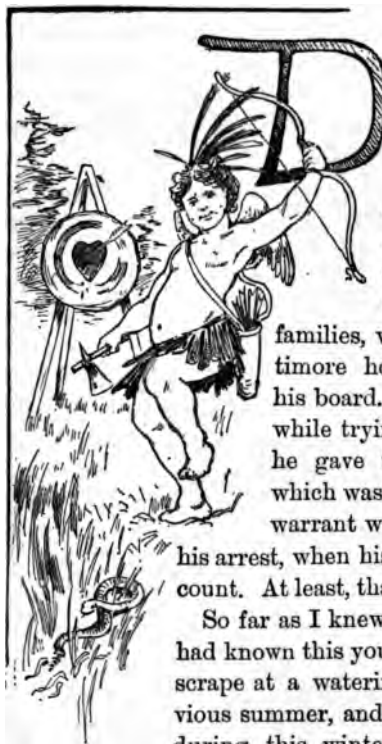
"Did I not do that skilfully?" I said, looking down into her face with a firm and determined glance.

She turned her head away and changed the subject by a passing remark. But somehow I felt more encouraged than ever before.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALICE'S ANSWER.

"Was ever woman in this humor won?"



DURING my absence society had so discussed my escapade that they had begun to grow weary of it. Then, too, a new sensation had been created by Jack Billings, the younger member of one of our well-known families, who tried to leave a Baltimore hotel without settling for his board. When he was stopped while trying to take his trunk out, he gave the proprietor a check which was returned "no funds." A warrant was about to be issued for his arrest, when his family settled up the account. At least, that is the way the story ran.

So far as I knew, it was likely true, for I had known this young man to be in a similar scrape at a watering-place during the previous summer, and he had given me a check during this winter for a debt of honor, which came back protested.

The episode, in this instance, served to distract attention from me, and I could not complain. It was one of those payments which old Time often makes in order to square up his books.

Ann Houghton's marriage to Jack Isaacs took place some time during the latter part of the season. She made a charming bride, and Jack looked happy, as I have no doubt he was. Jack does no work now save to sit in the club-room windows and remark on the females who pass by. Let it be said to his credit, however, that as soon as he could afford it he left off his usurious trade, and no doubt he would give you a stare of stony surprise were you to walk up to him and try to negotiate a loan on the old terms.

I presume Alice heard much more of the details of my affair on her return. She had always been quite a friend of Agnes, and I could not know how far the latter would take her into her confidence. In any case, it did not affect her manner toward me. As my trouble was now a thing of the past, people for the most part were willing to forget all about it—so far at least as it affected their association with me.

A few days after my return from Old Point, as I was walking up Walnut Street, I met Agnes Moore and Lum Riddle coming down. Since she had broken with me he had become her slave, I had been told, and she seemed to receive him with favor.

I was not able to understand it, for, to my mind, he was one of the most unattractive men of all she knew. It made me smile to think of a woman gifted with all the graces which Agnes possessed becoming *fiancé* with a man of Lum's character. But I somehow felt convinced that he was to be my successor.

Agnes, I think, would have passed me without recognition had I allowed her to do so, but I stopped and held out my hand cordially. She could not well refuse to take it, but it was not with very good grace that she did so.

"You are looking well," I said, smiling sweetly yet formally.

"I am very well," she answered, rather indifferently, but with a touch of defiance.

Lum said "How-de-doo," in his early English manner, and then we separated.

There was not much real cordiality on either side, I fear, but, as it happened, I saw Mrs. Hawtone passing on the other side of the way just as Agnes came up. I determined to force the greeting which we had just exchanged, for I knew she would observe it, and that, as she was both a gossip and a truthful woman (rare things together), I should receive the benefit of the interview among her friends.

"If Dick Conway shook hands with his former betrothed on Walnut Street, these stories which are circulated about him must be grossly exaggerated," etc. That was the way people would reason, I argued, and I think I was not far wrong. Little things of this kind oftentimes have great effect.

Then, too, my open intimacy with Alice Carlton was an element in my favor. She was known as a discreet and careful girl; if she found excuses for me, others would not be more particular.

In the course of a month from my arrival from Old Point I was again in favor in society, and, with one or two exceptions, people treated me as before. To be sure, so far as entertainments were concerned, there was nothing of any moment going on. In any case, I only cared for

them for the reason that I might thus be enabled to see Alice oftener.

During all my life I never spent so much time in carefully planning a scheme of conquest as in this instance. It became my object in life, the aim of my existence. I was determined that if it lay in my power Alice Carlton should be my wife. Did she not possess everything which I longed for, and which the others I had been interested in lacked? I do not wish you to understand that I acted in any way after the manner of foolish lovers who allow their hearts to run away with their heads. Unless a girl is deeply in love with a man, his love for her which appears too much on the surface will not help him to any large extent. It is the strong will and determination which will best serve him where there is a heart to be won. It was particularly so with Alice. She was gifted with a tender heart, but her disposition was calm and analytical, and a man was not likely to win her affection by an exhibition of calf-love; yet she was a woman who, above all things else, appreciated the honest side of life—particularly as to human affection. Any plan, therefore, which had for its basis artificiality was not to be relied upon.

As I have said, I knew it was useless to talk of love to her immediately following my trouble. Though I had prepared her, in what I had said at the assembly, for the statement that my engagement with Agnes was a mistake, yet I knew she would consider that, in any case, a proper time should elapse before I spoke of my love for herself. It was the feeling on her part that a dead love deserved a suitable time for mourning, even though the affection had been slight—just as we wear black for a near member of our family, even though disliked while living.

For many weeks, therefore, I contented myself with the

careful attention to Alice which might have been bestowed on a well-beloved sister. I was always on hand to render her services, but required nothing in return save now and then a smile of thanks. There was something quite delightful in the manner with which she received my attentions—a quiet appreciation of the trouble I took, without any of the overthankfulness of the school-girl class of women.

A woman who wishes to retain the respect of true men should not forget the respect due to herself. There is a certain amount of homage which she may claim by reason of her being a woman; when, added to this, she has beauty, there is no necessity for her to repay ordinary attentions by more than a gracious manner or a passing smile—at least, this is the way Alice looked at it.

At this time I was not aware that I had any serious rival. Alice was extremely popular, and received much attention from men generally. A number of these doubtless looked upon her with an eye to matrimony, for in addition to her beauty she was a girl of wealth; but she gave them but little encouragement. Certainly, so far as attentions went, I was first in her favor.

Tom Dickson, indeed, was still a patient admirer of Alice's. Occasionally he would stop in while I was there and take part in the conversation in a friendly sort of way. I did not stand in much fear of him, however, for he had not about him the manners of a lover, and Alice treated him like an old friend for whom she had the highest respect and admiration, but not a thought of love or marriage.

As time went on I began to speak of my affection for her; it was in an unassuming way at first, and oftentimes under the guise of small talk of society. There are many ways in which you can convey your meaning.

She would listen attentively and eagerly to my words, but would put me off with light and careless excuses.

"Oh," she would say, "I cannot think of such things yet. In a year or two I shall know my heart better."

Then she would look up at me with her pure, honest eyes, and give me a glance, half-earnest, half-fun, which led me on to vow in my heart that I would win her, come what might.

In her parlor, one evening, I took up the subject again. After I had told her somewhat of my hope that she would grow to care for me, she said:

"You know, Mr. Conway, I do not care for any man in the way a woman should who accepts an offer of marriage. It must at least be a satisfaction to you to know that I am fancy free, even though I cannot care for you in the way you wish," and she glanced at me with a smile of interest.

"No," I said, "it is not altogether satisfactory. I am different from some men in my affection. I am not absurdly jealous of others' attentions to you. I am deeply in love with you myself, and with my great affection I cannot contemplate the idea that there is no hope for me. If you will say now, though, that you know in your heart that you can never care for me as a lover, I will go away and never trouble you again."

I arose from my seat and gazed full into her face. Her eyes were cast down before my earnest glance. Presently she raised them to mine with a coy look.

"I don't think I would leave in that sudden way if I were you," she said, and laughed softly.

She looked so beautiful as she said it, and there was such an air of invitation about her that I would have given my life at the moment to clasp her in my arms and kiss her upturned mouth. But I was too much in doubt as to her

true feelings to risk all on so sudden a move. I felt that if I made a mistake she would never forgive me.

"If you bid me stay, it must be with the understanding that I have the privilege of devoting myself to you as your lover when and where I can," I said.

"Do you not know that the truest lover is often silent?" she asked. "If you tell me of your love so often I shall think it born of insincerity, which furnishes also all the sustenance for it. Notice most men in love, and you will see how they lose the capacity to express their feelings in words. They usually sigh, or sit moping in a corner."

"Has your experience been, then, so wide?" I inquired, smiling.

"Oh! no; but I heard of it," she answered, blushing deeply.

I knew full well that she had seen it in her own personal experience.

I know that women are given credit for always hurrying off to tell their sisters of the proposals they may have received, and it is true of the school-girl type. I do not think that this class of girl has many to tell of, however, but what she lacks in reality she trusts to her imagination for. On the other hand, I am convinced, from what I have seen and know, that if all the proposals which take place were known to the world, there would be gossip enough to supply society, without anything further, for years. Many a wife who congratulates herself on being first-love would be reduced to the position of sixth or seventh in the ranks of the days gone by.

You see a man very attentive to a girl; it continues for several months. Suddenly you notice them meet at a ball. He says, "How de do?" in a distant sort of a way, and passes on. This salutation is an attempt on his part to

delude the public. If it were not for that, he would not speak at all. You ask him how he comes on in that quarter.

"By Gawarge! dea boy, got awfully tired, ye know, and drew off," he says.

You can see he is not telling the truth. As he utters the falsehood his mind goes back to an evening, not far distant, when, in the seclusion of her parlor, over which a maroon shade casts a soft light, he put it to the touch and lost it all.

A girl looks up into his eyes and says:

"Oh, I am so dreadfully sorry! But you know I never dreamed of this. Let us be friends," etc.—you know the formula. I think the girls must have a form-book from which they study their refusals—they sound so much alike. I have questioned fellows about it as well as the fair sex, and their admirers are usually dismissed in the same way.

I went on to explain to Alice that I could not resist the impulse to tell her of my love, and hoped she would not believe it less deep because of my fluency.

"I tell you what you do," she said, in reply; "promise not to speak to me of love for a year, and then I will give you a decided answer."

"I do not see how I can resist the desire to tell you of it, during all that time," I answered; "but if you will let me see you as usual, I will do my best to try and follow out your wishes."

And so it was agreed that I should not mention my love for her for one year. In the meantime our old relations continued.

"Mr. Conway," she said, one day some few weeks after the compact had been entered into, "I think you will ex-

pect too much of me when that year elapses, and perhaps it would be as well to call our bargain of silence off."

"Then I shall certainly make love to you more earnestly than ever," I replied.

"Well, if you will resist Fate I cannot help it," she said, laughing.

There was never a word or look or sign with which women know so well how to dismiss men. There was that negative encouragement which is all a modest woman allows herself.

The end, of course, one way or another, was certain to come soon. I was growing desperate. I could not believe that I was not to win this woman, who was everything in life that I longed for.

I took her to the theatre night after night, and drove with her in the park often. A number of presents were received by her from me, and attentions innumerable. We were seen together so much in public that it came at last to be generally accepted that we were engaged to be married.

I felt that matters could not continue between us in their present indefinite condition. For my own sake it was necessary to know what her feelings were. I was confident that a strong appeal to her now must be successful. She certainly could not mean to throw me over after what had passed. For many weeks past my life had been more steady than ever before since I had become a man. I had planned a conquest; I had run a fair race, I thought; I could see no one else to take the prize from me. So confident was I that I should be successful that I had the diamond in the ring which Agnes had returned to me reset, intending that it should become Alice's engagement-ring.

It was in her parlor that the emotional scene took place.

I came in somewhat later than usual. There was another caller that evening. It was Tom Dickson. Tom had lately lost most of his fortune, which came to him by inheritance. It had been invested in railroad-stock, and the company had failed and gone into a receiver's hands. He had nothing now save his profession to depend on, but he was working steadily at it and had made quite a name for himself. The income which he received from it just sufficed to support him in a quiet way. I did not think he was a very dangerous rival of mine here.

Alice was in a charming humor, and we three chatted together in an unconventional manner. She smiled at me in a most encouraging way once or twice, and treated Tom in her old sisterly fashion.

Tom departed early.

I had made up my mind that I would have a definite answer to-night. I was more excited than I appeared. What man who has spent time and thought in his efforts to win a beautiful woman, and stands at the threshold of the final conversation, does not hesitate under the weight of the uncertainty.

"Alice—Miss Carlton," I said, earnestly, as I leaned forward and looked into her face, "I must speak to you of a matter which is of deep importance to me."

One is apt, unconsciously, to run into formal language when excited and earnest. She was sitting near a small reception-table, and a japanese lamp, in the form of a great parasol, stood upon it and cast a subdued light upon her. She was attired in a maroon-velvet reception-dress, with delicate lace about her white throat.

She flushed up when I began, but grew somewhat pale, I thought, as I continued. She was fully aware of the tenour of what I was about to say, and it made her nervous. From

a vase on the table she took a rose, and began to pluck its petals off one by one.

"You know," I continued, "that matters cannot remain as they are between us. Day by day I have been growing more and more deeply in love with you, until now to lose you will mean the loss of everything in the world of value to me. I feel I can offer you my whole affection."

Her eyes, which had been cast down, were now turned for a moment up to mine. Her face was pallid.

"Alice," I said, "you do care for me, do you not? You must know how much I love you. I think I have shown by my devotion the depth of my love."

My voice trembled. She saw I was in dead earnest. She was evidently affected by my appeal, but she did not reply.

"Give me your answer, will you not?" I asked, softly, holding out my arms.

Then she spoke:

"Mr. Conway, I am deeply sorry, but I did not know you were in earnest; I thought it was only a thing of the passing moment, you see. We have talked so lightly of it, heretofore, I did not know you meant it seriously." She hesitated a moment, and then added: "And you see I'm engaged to be married to Tom Dickson."

For almost a minute, I think, we sat in silence, Alice idly picking a second rose to pieces. I have read of people being struck dumb with surprise. I had never experienced the sensation before. I thought deeply and clearly over the events of the past few months. My anger rose as I did so. Did this woman mean to say that she rejected my love in this way, after receiving my devotion and attentions, and watching me growing more and more infatuated day by day, without a word of disapproval—nay,

with all the encouragement she could give me in a quiet way?

At last I rose. I crossed the room in silence, and took my hat and cane from the table. Then I returned and stood immediately before her. She looked up, and then quickly cast her eyes down again.

"Miss Carlton," I said, in a firm, low, stern voice, "to say I am astonished does not begin to express my feelings. I considered you an intelligent, honest woman. If what you tell me is true, you are either wanting sense or you are the wickedest woman I ever met."

"You forget yourself, Mr. Conway; I will allow no man to talk to me like that," she said, rising. Her tone was severe and her face flushed up to the roots of her hair.

"You force me to it," I said, more humbly. "Have I not a right to expect better treatment than this? Can you deny that you have encouraged me in my attentions; that you have allowed me—and this is the end of it all! What have I done to deserve this?"

Alice stood now fully erect. She was a finely developed woman, and one of her shapely hands was clinched and rested on the table at her side. The pose was almost masculine in its strength. Her hair was done up in a coil at the back of her head, which was held erect like that of a defiant fawn. I could see her chiselled nostrils panting with hot breath. She looked me fearlessly in the eyes, never taking them from me as she spoke. It was almost as if she had nerved herself to carrying out to the end a deliberately formed plan.

"I will acknowledge I have been cruel," she said, sternly and fearlessly, "but what else do you think you deserve? Look back on your past life and tell me, honestly (for you have some honesty in your nature, which saves you from

being entirely base), what sort of love a man who has led the kind of life you have can offer to a woman who has, at least, kept herself pure. I am not a stupid girl, nor have I lived all my life in a convent. I have, to my sorrow, in the last few years learned to apprehend much of what happens in the life of a man of the world. How true was your story of your innocence in your relations with poor little Daisy Millman? How true that Agnes Moore broke off her engagement from pique? How many pages in your history are counterparts of that one which contains Daisy's story? Do you mean to tell me that yours is the kind of affection which I can accept, in justice to myself? Do you think I could look upon you as my lord and master and really love you?"

She paused. I gazed at her in silent astonishment. I had never seen her so much excited. Yet her voice was steady and strong.

"It would be vain for you to deny to me that your past life has been free from offence in ways which cannot be mentioned between you and me. Let me tell you of one thing that alone is enough to place a barrier between us forever. I look upon truth in a man much in the manner in which the world views purity in a woman—a jewel which must be possessed by one we marry. Have you been truthful with me? Let me answer that by saying that Agnes Moore is a very dear, intimate friend of mine, and that she has told me much about you which I was pained to hear. Mr. Rawlings is a very near friend of my uncle in a business way, and even Ann Houghton has told me, in confidence, some facts which bear on the question. I have been cruel, perhaps, but do you not deserve it?"

"I will not argue with a woman who is so utterly unjust as you are," I answered, quickly. "You have treated me

as an intimate friend for months, accepted my attentions and gifts, and now turn upon me as a malefactor. Even the basest criminal is entitled to a belief in his innocence until his guilt is proved, but you have tried and condemned your friend without either hearing or evidence."

She was about to say something further, I think, but I refused to listen, and made no response to her forced "Good-bye!" which came to me as I closed the hall-door behind me.

CHAPTER XIX.

A NECESSARY SACRIFICE.

"Accommodate: that is, when a man is, as they say, accommodated, or when a man is—being—whereby—he may be thought to be accommodated; which is an excellent thing."

THERE are very few loves which can withstand the effect of indifference. Love begets love, and, in many engagements to marry, the truest affection only comes after the compact is made, because then the parties to it grow to know each other better than they can possibly do when not bound by such a tie, and if their natures are congenial their love grows deeper. If it be true that indifference kills love, it is much more certain that such treatment as that which I had received from Alice Carlton was enough to disgust any man, no matter how deep his affection might have been.

To have her encourage me as she had done, even though in a somewhat negative way, receiving all manner of attentions from me, to such an extent as to lead the public to believe in our engagement, and then, when I declared my-

self, announcing her engagement to another man, was a course calculated to drive me to actually hate her.

Still, revile her as I might for her conduct, determine as I would in my mind to forget her, I had never before been so depressed over an affair of the kind.

Quite early on the morning following my rejection, as I was passing down Chestnut Street in the business district, I saw Alice coming toward me on my side of the way.

There is always something particularly striking about the personality of a society girl when you meet her in the business portion of the town in the early morning. She usually glides along with downcast head and modest mien, as if appreciating the fact that her surroundings are a trifle unfit, and that she is attracting more than the ordinary amount of attention from the business men.

If she is a pretty girl, and by accident as it were, catches your eye and smiles at you, you will probably be doubly charmed. But if, in addition to this, you have wandering through your brain the voluptuous strains of the dreamy waltz you danced with her but an hour or two previously, and you see upon her bosom some of the flowers which you gave her, you will go to your business feeling that this work-a-day world is not all a sham, and that, despite the moralizing of philosophers, life, after all, is worth living.

Though I could not look upon Alice with such a rosy view on this particular morning, I was struck with her beauty.

She was a rather tall girl, and her walk, while on the street, was very graceful and easy, and yet gave you an idea of strength both of body and character. She had on a dress of rough Scotch cheviot, in black and gray stripes, and a dainty hat, as jaunty as the dignity of her appear-

ance warranted. At her breast was pinned a large corsage bouquet of Jacqueminot roses. As she neared me she raised her eyes and looked me full in the face.

I raised my hat formally, but neither spoke nor smiled.

There was an appearance of laughter in her dark eyes as she passed, and in the last memory which remained to me of her face, it seemed to me to bear the impress of a half-playful, half-cynical smile about the corners of the mouth.

For some time after this I refrained from going out in the world of society. I revenged myself on Fate for her harsh treatment by plunging into a wild course of dissipation—seeking to drown my sorrow and disappointment in this way.

The engagement of Alice and Tom Dickson was announced in a few days after this, and in a week or so that of Agnes Moore and Lum Riddle was given out to the world. They were the prevailing topics of conversation for some time.

I think some of my friends and acquaintances of an inquiring turn of mind suspected that I was hurt by Miss Carlton's engagement, for there was a tendency among them to joke me about it. I have generally found in such cases that to say you are in love, and that your heart is broken, is a more effective disguise than to disavow it; therefore, when anyone spoke to me concerning my disappointment, I would say—

"You are right there. I was desperately in love with that girl, and my heart is broken. Don't tell, will you? I was engaged to her myself, but she threw me over."

No one believed this, because it was told so openly; and my friends soon got the impression that my feelings had not been very deeply hurt.

Society soon broke up in the city, as summer was once

more at hand. Devotees of gayety and fashion fled to the shore, the mountains, and the suburban resorts. I did not take any great interest in its movements. I was occupied in a life of pleasure somewhat outside of its limits—so far at least as the feminine part was concerned. My recent experience had been amply sufficient to satisfy me. I was still living in the city, and it was a matter of too much trouble to seek society by going out of town. With a number of the boys I would run down to the shore over Sunday, now and then; but our time was taken up with other amusements, which did not allow us to seek the belles of the past winter.

Charlie Walton, Con Creighton, and myself made our plans to go abroad for the months of July and August. I had so little to interest me at home that I would have gladly started on a trip of two years' duration. I thought a change of atmosphere would be of advantage to me.

About the middle of July we started.

We three were certainly a congenial and jolly party for a foreign tour, and though both Con and myself had visited London and Paris before, we found ample to interest and amuse us. Great as is the dissipation in the society of our native land, it can in no way compare with that of London and the continental cities. When I say society, you will understand, of course, that I refer to the most fashionable and select circles of the places mentioned. We plunged into a whirl of gayety and dissipation, and in my present situation I felt reckless, and sought in the variety of such a life to blot out the remembrance of my failure.

I had not been abroad for over six weeks when I received a letter from my father, which contained somewhat interesting information. It was the only one he had favored me with since my departure.

"I regret to inform you," it said, "that through an unfortunate investment I have lost everything I had in the world, and, in addition, the board of directors have requested my resignation as president of the bank. At present things look black, and I am of opinion it would be wise for you to return at once on receipt of this."

There was no further explanation of affairs.

I was somewhat in doubt whether my father had not placed himself in a position where he could be held responsible for some criminal act; but as he made no mention of Canada or leaving town, I came to the conclusion, finally, that he had been taking a flyer in some stocks and had got on the wrong side of the market. As the bank of which he was president was a slow, Quaker concern, I suppose they considered this was not proper action for him, and therefore asked for his resignation.

In any case, I could see no reason for returning home any sooner than my plans allowed. I had sufficient money at my command to carry me for a month longer, and I determined not to disturb myself about my father at present, but to enjoy life while fortune stood by me.

I dropped a line to the governor, telling him that my plans did not allow of my return for sometime yet, and that, in any case, I feared I could not be of any great assistance to him. I told him that I should return in a month or so, and if he really needed me to let me know.

I did not hear from him again during the course of my trip.

We played cards and indulged in almost all the gambling games of Europe during our travels, and the balance for some time was in my favor. As long as luck held out I was quite indifferent about my return. One day, alas! it changed, as it is sure to do if you only play continuously.

I was soon in debt to my companions, with no means with which to pay.

It was at this time that I resolved that we had enough of foreign travel, and that the time had come for a return. My companions assented quite readily, and we were soon on our way home. They loaned me sufficient to pay my travelling expenses. I explained that I would straighten it all out on my return, that I was short owing to my last letter of credit having gone astray.

In London Con's eye was caught by the name of Mrs. Manly and Miss Belle Manly among the arrivals at one of the hotels. We called together on them. Belle received us in a very enthusiastic manner, and talked with all the volubility of old. I saw that she had taken to the use of rouge for her cheeks and pencils for her eyelids.

While we were there, in came a short, stout, florid little fellow, of about forty or forty-five years of age, with mustache and imperial and eye-glass. He was dressed as carefully as a model for a tailor, walked with a mincing step, and lisped in his talk. His accent marked him at once for a Frenchman. He was introduced as the Count Montague.

When Mrs. Manley came in she seized an early opportunity of telling us this was Belle's *fiancé*.

"Now do not for one moment imagine that my little Belle has not had many offers from you men in her own dear country," she said, while Belle was deeply engaged for a moment with her count; "but, you see, Belle is so particular."

"Well, Con," I said, as we departed, after warm wishes on both sides, "well, Con, are you filled with regrets and sorrow?"

"Oh! go hang yourself, Dick," he said, with a motion

of disgust. "What in the name of the good, the true, and the beautiful did I see in her?"

On my arrival at home I found that my father had been compelled to leave his Walnut Street house, and that it was now advertised for sale by the sheriff. It was as I had suspected. The old man was not in any way criminally liable, and his accounts as president were right to a cent; but he had made a great effort to double his fortune at one stroke, and had, in place of succeeding, lost all he had in the world, besides running into debt.

While enjoying life abroad the idea of my father's misfortune had not been brought home to me; but now, when the bare facts confronted me, it was not an agreeable thing to contemplate. My father had some further news, which was rather more cheering, though it was of a rather unexpected character.

"I wish to tell you now, what all the world will know in a week or two," he said, at our first interview. "I am engaged to be married to Mrs. Moore."

I was surprised that, in view of his trouble, he had been able to persuade her to take such a step. It is true she was not a very handsome woman, though attractive and wealthy; but she was quite noted in the social world, and to announce her engagement to the bankrupt of a few weeks was a bold position to take. It may be that father was a very domestic and affectionate character when in her society, and that his taciturnity had relaxed so far as to utter words of burning love; but I could not well believe it. However that may be, he had won her consent to their marriage that fall.

"As to your future," he said, "I do not know what to say. You will find it difficult to support yourself on the results of your profession at present, and always will, unless

you take more interest in it than you have done heretofore. You had better try and look out for yourself in some way, as I do not see that I shall be able to make you any large allowance in the future. Marry a rich woman! You are fairly good-looking and intelligent."

This was all he would say on the subject. He appeared to dismiss it from his attention. When I spoke about it again once or twice, he greeted my remarks with his usual series of "humphs."

Bankrupts always manage to live in some way, however, and father was no exception to the rule. When I returned from abroad he was staying at a fashionable hotel, and seemed amply able to meet his current bills. I took up my residence there also, in order to be near him, and directed that the bills for my board should be made out to him. Now and then I would request him for the loan of twenty-five or fifty dollars, and he would pass over the amount without comment. It is needless to remark that I was never in a condition to repay any of these loans.

During the fall, up to the time of his marriage, we lived in this way. After that ceremony took place I engaged rooms at a boarding-house on Spruce Street, and drew on my father for expenses from time to time.

Mrs. Moore was a wealthy woman, and while I do not know what requirements she laid on her liege lord about pecuniary matters, yet for a time he was in funds sufficient to accommodate our daily wants.

Agnes and her mother were not married at the same time. I suppose it was deemed wise to avoid the comparisons which are always made, but which are seldom pleasant. Mrs. Moore was quite a young-looking woman for her years, and as a bride she was charming, certainly —but it was desirable to avoid criticism.

Agnes was married about a month after her mother; and, within a week or two following, Tom Dickson and Alice Carlton were joined in that heavenly tie.

Lum Riddle, with his early English walk, was an unpleasant spectacle as he paraded up the aisle. No doubt the match was a good one, as such things are considered. He was wealthy and of high station, and she was pretty and good. There were many, of course, envious of her. Yet when I considered that here was a man of absolutely no delicacy of feeling or appreciation of sentiment marrying a woman who, if she was not highly intelligent, was at least possessed of a deeply sympathetic nature, and who needed, above all, a husband who was capable of understanding her, the match was not, to my mind, a particularly admirable one. Lum, though a rather "fast" man as to his character, was slow and heavy in his ways, with but little humor to brighten him up. I did not see much happiness ahead for Agnes.

Of the other match there was not much to be said except by way of congratulation. I must acknowledge that Tom was a fine fellow, and that while Alice had certainly treated me most shamefully, she was, in point of intellect, a fit match for him.

I soon grew disgusted with living on my father. His advances were not always up to my call in amount, and came very irregularly. I was compelled to seriously economize, something I was not used to, and had never cared to familiarize myself with.

As the winter came on I took up one aim and followed it persistently for many months. I was determined to relieve myself of money cares, even if in doing so I were compelled to assume others.

I fixed in my mind that I must marry Sarah Kurtz.

far as pecuniary considerations were concerned, she was the most eligible girl in the city. Then, too, her social station was unimpeachable. She was not to be blamed for the fact that nature had made her homely. Her attractions were amply sufficient to give her a number of admirers, many of whom sought her hand in marriage. She was by no means a stupid girl, and was a thorough woman of the world in her way of thought.

I was, indeed, in no condition to be very particular, but this was, of course, an element against me. Sarah would be apt to appraise at its true value the sudden devotion of a man, immediately following his father's failure. To overcome this prejudice I made my approaches gradual. I called seldom at first, but increased the number of my visits, as time went on, until I became a constant caller, and was on terms of great intimacy with her.

There was one great element in my favor, and that was Sarah's liking for me from the beginning. Still, it was a long time before I won her to believe in my love.

I was driving her one day in the park. I had hired a sleigh for the purpose; I thought it would be a good investment. I made up my mind before I started to put to her the important question before our return.

At last, as we drove along a secluded road, I spoke.

"Sarah," I said, "you know what I am going to say, do you not?"

"No," she said, and her voice trembled; "but don't you think we had better change the subject?"

"I must speak now," I answered. "I love you and want you to consent to be my wife. I know you will point to my past, and tell me I do not know my own mind; but just try me and see how true and devoted I will be. It is in vain to deny that I have thought myself in love before,

but I know my mistake now. You will say yes, won't you?"

I took her hand in mine beneath the sleigh robes. It was not a very lovable sort of a hand—too bony. Somehow came back to me the dear, chubby, sunburned little hand, so full and warm, of Kitty Archer, and that sweet summer-day in quaint Nantucket. Alas! what a difference.

"Oh! Dick, you must not talk so," was what Sarah said at last; but that first name, together with a responsive pressure from the hand I held, was enough for me.

I was glad that at that moment we reached the highway, where a string of sleighs was passing. I was enabled to postpone the customary kiss. You may be sure I sought no secluded roads on our return.

I insisted that we should announce our engagement at once, and fix our marriage for the spring; and after a slight hesitation Sarah consented.

. . . . . .

I write this in my handsome den, of which I have spoken to you heretofore. At that time I forgot to say that my wife's rooms are just across the hall-way. I cannot complain of unhappiness—in fact, my wife and I get along very well together. She allows me as much money as I have need for, and the boys about town still call me "Dick." I have not lost my ability to play poker, and midnight lunches still possess many attractions for me. During the day you will find me at the windows of the Philadelphia Club, looking at the handsome women as they go by. If I imbibe too freely, I come home to this den of mine, and as I am seldom violent, I do not often disturb anyone.

It has been quite a new sensation for me to tell you as

much as I could of my past life. When my old friend, Blanche Conscience, whom I had not seen for years, asked me for some notes on society life, I laughed, but as soon as I fairly started in on the task, it took hold of me and hurried me on through all these pages.

I fear I have not performed my work very well, but I think you will find points of interest in the recital. In any event, you can take my word for it that I have been honest in my effort to give you a truthful picture of society life as it is at present.

My friend is largely responsible for the editing of the book, and she has exorcised a number of the incidents originally narrated, on the ground that they were not of a character suitable for the public.